

ADOLPHE

BORZOI

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ADOLPHE

A NARRATIVE FOUND AMONG THE PAPERS OF AN UNKNOWN PERSON

AND EDITED BY

M. BENJAMIN DE CONSTANT

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With an introduction by

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INTRODUCTION

By Henry K. Marks

No one I suppose has ever paid a dearer price for literary immortality than Benjamin Constant. The man himself has ceased to exist, he has become a legend; he has become Adolphe. And yet, if one has an eye for esthetic values, nothing could be more fitting, nothing more appropriate to his life and character, nor more consistent with the motto which he made for himself: "Sola inconstantia constans." It is a pity therefore, I think, that an effort at rehabilitation should be now in progress. Gustave Rudler in his meticulous and monumental "Jeunesse de Benjamin Constant" does him, it seems to me, little service, and it would be far better, far more interesting certainly, and surely infinitely more to the constantine liking if that half-monster of him created by Sainte-Beuve under the Broglie and royalist influence were to continue to persist.

That it has persisted to this late date is proof enough of the amazing authority and vitality of this little master-piece.

Written in 1807, within a period of two weeks, to get it out of his system, as he himself put it, the book was not published until almost ten years later, and then curiously enough in England, the French publication not occurring until the following year. Born in 1767 Constant therefore turns author at the age of forty.

Up to this moment he has done nothing to especially distinguish himself. Behind him lies a childhood in his birthplace Switzerland, a stormy adolescence, scattered over German, English and Scotch universities, a number of fugitive love episodes, his intimacy with Madame de Charrière, his sojourn as Kammerjunker at the Court of Brunswick, his marriage to Marianne, from whom he is forced to separate because of her numerous infidelities, and then finally his long relationship with Madame de Staël. He emerges from this last completely exhausted. The energetic, erratic, domineering lady, the "homme-femme" has been too much for him. He has followed her, or to be more exact, he has been dragged by

her from Coppet to Paris, from Paris to Coppet, and from Coppet back again to Paris. She has resolved to "make him" by pushing him into the thick of the politics of the Directoire and Consulate. When finally she is exiled by Napoleon, he shares her exile with her. With her he goes to Weimar and soon after comes the break. He can endure no more and in particular no more of her. He is very tired. He longs for a little peace. It is at this period of his life, before his maturer career begins which sees him Minister of the Hundred Days under Napoleon, Deputy under Louis Philippe, writer on political and religious subjects, and the great apostle of Parliamentary Government and Liberalism in France, that he writes Adolphe. A sensation is immediately produced, extending from England to Italy, and it must be assumed, stirring on its passage not a little the waters of the lake of Geneva, though from her retreat in Coppet, the Chatelaine, whatever her personal feelings, remarks merely that "Benjamin has taken it into his head to write a novel and it is certainly the most original and touching I've ever read." But if Madame de Staël appreciated the liter-

ary merit of Adolphe, and notwithstanding the hostile Sainte-Beuve to the contrary, there is every reason to believe she did, she was surely in a very small minority. There are obvious and definite reasons for this. In the first place, the time was not ripe for a purely psychological novel, and above all for a novel of this uncompromising type. The public still wanted to read novels like Chateaubriand's René. It wanted to weep, but it was not willing to suffer. And here was a novel which if you read it rightly would make you suffer. It would bruise and hurt you. It was life to the quick. It was the writhing agony of a human soul. And a soul, not like Réné's, not at all noble, which could say complacently of itself: "I am a painful dream . . . I am bored with life, boredom has always devoured me: what interests other men does not touch me," but a soul which while it was willing to show itself to you as poor and pitiable, asked for no pity. I believe I am right in thinking that it is this complete frankness and absence of all play for pity, which accounted in large part at least for the cool reception first accorded

Adolphe, and equally right in thinking that those modern readers who will not like the book, without knowing exactly why, will find this the cause. That we seek unconsciously to identify ourselves with the characters of a novel there can be little doubt. But who will want to identify himself with Adolphe? Who even secretly seeing himself in him will be willing to make the confession? Very few, I am sure. We cannot endure such nakedness. There is something terrible about it, something intensely shocking. But why? Because each one of us realizes that somewhere in himself, there is an Adolphe he is trying to conceal, not from others merely but from himself. By this token, Adolphe ceases to become simply personal and particular and becomes universal. He is the fly in the limpid honey of our conceit and self-esteem, our Achilles heel, our St. John denouncing us. He is even more. He is the symbol of our poor mortality, of all our proud resolves we have made and broken, of all our eternal fidelities that have passed, of all those emotions we have arrogantly vowed would exist for ever and have lasted for a day. In

brief, he is our "Vieil homme," the vieil homme we would disclaim in ourselves and find in others.

That all this must consciously or unconsciously have hostilely affected Adolphe's early public, is certain, and especially since there was little question in its mind as to whom the character concerned. It was Constant undoubtedly. A character like this had too much veracity to be imagined. And besides, there was the factual evidence. It was known that Constant had had just such a youth as he had described, that Adolphe's father tallied with his own father, and his intimacy with Madame de Charrière (the old friend of the story) was recalled. No sooner was the book in general circulation and being discussed from this to him wholly unexpected personal angle, for he had naïvely believed he had disarmed all such criticism by adding a preface denying the reality of his personages, than there occurred a typical constantine reaction. It is one thing to damn yourself, it is quite another to hear yourself damned by others. He was at once bitterly regretful. "I was urged to print this novel," he wrote to Madame Récamier, "now I am

sorry I did. I never see the inconvenience of things until after I have done them. I am afraid that a certain person will be hurt by it." Was this the real reason—this fear of hurting "someone"? It is extremely doubtful. The real reason must be sought rather in the chilly blast of criticism he suddenly discovered directed against his hero who had become identified with himself. It is interesting in this connection to contrast Constant the man with Constant the sharp and even bitter self-analyst. There is something touching too in his all too frail humanness. He is rationalizing like the rest of us. For it is perfectly evident that if he had ever truly considered this "someone," he would not have read his manuscript during the ten years that preceded its publication to just those audiences who would have suspected her identity most readily. And he had done so, not only in Paris, but in London. It is known too, that after his break with Madame de Staël, and after his second marriage, feeling himself more secure, he had read the manuscript with greater and greater frequency. But these audiences were of the elect, they knew him, they were sympathetic toward him.

Miss Schermerhorn in her recent book on "Constant" gives a number of amusing details as to the emotional reactions of his auditors, who appear to have been chiefly ladies. Lady Charlotte Campbell was said to have been so affected, that when he had finished his reading she threw herself at his feet begging him to change the ending. Lady Caroline Lamb saw in the sufferings of the heroine so many resemblances to her own unhappy passion for Byron, that she lost all self-control, while Walpole's friends the Misses Berry were made positively ill. In Paris, the emotional success of the intimate readings appears to have been even more striking, for according to the Duc de Broglie who heard him read it "ten or fifteen times" under the spell of his (Constant's) emotion, the whole company wept with him. That Constant expected therefore a similar reception from the general public, there can be little doubt. The last thing he wanted to be to it was Adolphe. What he wanted really to be was Réné.

However this may be, the real curiosity did not concern whether Constant was or was not Adolphe, but who was the original of the tragic

heroine, Ellénore. Who was this woman, who could love with such passionate intensity that she could sacrifice everything to love? She was obviously no more an imaginary portrait than was Adolphe. The name of a Mrs. Lindsay was first mentioned. This lady had been the mistress of a certain de Lamoignan at the time of the Consulate, and in London had had a Salon much frequented by royalist celebrities. Chateaubriand who had known her there described her as an "esprit dur," "possessing nobility of soul and loftiness of character—the last of the Nînons." In this far, therefore, she resembled Ellénore, and it is probable that gossip would have gone no further had it not been for an indiscreet letter from Sismondi, the historian of the Italian Republics, to his friend the Countess of Albany, which to use Sainte-Beuve's words "tore the veils and snatched away the masks"—Ellénore was Madame de Staël.

Sismondi's letter is worth quoting at some length I think, not only because of his authoritative identification of the two characters, but because of the interesting sidelights he casts upon Constant and Madame de Staël.

As a frequent gust at Coppet, he had known them both and had often been Constant's confidant. He says:

"I recognize the author on every page and never has a confession offered a more life-like portrait to my eyes. He makes me comprehend all his faults, but he does not excuse them, nor does he seem to have any idea at all of making them lovable. It is possible that once he may have been more really in love than he paints himself in his book: but at the time I knew him, he was exactly like Adolphe, with just as little love, no less agitated, no less bitter, no less occupied in cajoling again and deceiving anew through a sentiment of kindness her whom he had lacerated. He has evidently wished to remove the portrait of Ellénore from all resemblance to her. To this end, he has changed everything, country, condition, appearance, esprit. Neither the circumstances of her life, nor of her person have any identity. The result of this is that in certain particulars she shows herself during the course of the story quite different from what he had announced her to be: but in her impetuosity and her exaction in the ties of love, one cannot mistake

her. This apparent intimacy, this passionate domination during which they rend and tear each other by all that anger and hate can dictate, is their history toward one another. This resemblance alone is so striking as to make all other disguises quite useless."

If one reads the "Journal Intime" of Constant which was first made public (in part) in La Revue Internationale, 1887, and in book form in 1895, or "Les Cahiers Verts" which contains the note books and journals of Rosalie de Constant, Constant's delightful and amusing cousin, he will find a complete confirmation of Sismondi's letter.

But however interesting it is to know that Ellénore represents Madame de Staël, the profound and lasting significance of this book lies undoubtedly in the analysis of Adolphe's character. Ellénore seems a little unreal, a little artificial, a little far away. Constant has not been quite able to give her flesh and blood. She is never fully realized whether it is because as Faguet thinks, Constant lacked the essential gift of the creative artist, or because he was so dominated by Madame de Staël's personality he could not break away from it, I

cannot say. But Faguet's explanation would seem the more likely one. For what applies to Ellénore, applies in still greater degree to all the secondary figures—Adolphe's father, the Count, Ellénore's protector, the meddling friend (who by the way has been identified as Madame Récamier), Adolphe's friends. They are all so little differentiated, that each might stand for the other without trouble. But when we come to Adolphe, we are aware at once, that he could be no one but himself. He is not an attempted creation: he is a searching and ruthless self-portrait to which I know nothing comparable in any literature.

What is the secret of this character, or of this soul rather which as it exposes itself to us becomes more and more enigmatic and baffling? Much has been written about it. Many explanations have been given. None of them seem to me satisfactory. To call Adolphe a "cérébral sensible" is obviously to do no more than to give him a descriptive label, to state that he is an individual in whom both intellect and sensibility are highly developed. It is much like saying that he wore a top hat with tan bots, an unusual combination

certainly but not revelatory. Nor are we much if any nearer a solution with the celebrated "dissociation" or "splitting" theory by which is meant the "divorce of the lucid sane incorruptible intelligence, from the rest of the being which is uncertain, troubled and ill." Again, this is merely descriptive. Nor does Paul Bourget in his fine study advance the matter a bit further by pointing out in Adolphe "the co-existence in the same soul of the most inefficient lucidity of intelligence with the worst sensual or sentimental disorder." These things are all self-evident. Adolphe is the arch type of them. But how explain them?

It seems to me that if Adolphe is regarded as a case of emotional infantilism, much that is confusing and obscure in his character will be made at once clear. By this, I would mean to say that while his intellect has developed to an adult degree, his emotional growth, on the contrary, has been arrested: it has remained infantile. There results therefore, the combination of the brain of a man and the emotions of a child, obviously unable to keep pace with one another. The emotions act, the intellect is aghast. It asks itself why—how

could I have done it! This cry is continuous throughout Adolphe. Or if the intellect tries to direct the emotions, we have the plaint: what shall I do? There is no co-ordination, no synchrony, no harmony. There is a perpetual contradiction, an eternal conflict between a man and a child. Clearly Adolphe under these circumstances can get nowhere. The simplest decision must be for him a kind of torture. What others do spontaneously must be for him a matter of long deliberation and more likely to end disastrously than not. He has no moment of pure freedom. He is constantly harassed. He can never for a moment be himself, because he has no self, and because between his two selves, adult and infantile, there can be no fusion.

From this point of view, Adolphe becomes a tragic figure, helpless against his destiny, and it is from this point of view, I think, he ought to be considered. Granting his nature, he can bring no happiness to himself nor to others. He must always be isolated, different, suspect, a kind of moral and social pariah. His soul can find no roots, so to speak, either in him-

self or anyone else. He must drift to the very end of time.

And by the same token, he cannot love. He can play at love, to be sure, he can pretend to love but real passion is denied him. He is one of those people of whom La Rochefoucauld says "They would never have loved at all if they had not heard love talked about." But if he is denied the capacity to love, he has been endowed instead with an extraordinary sensitiveness which dissimulates his emptiness both to himself and to Ellénore. But to Ellénore for a time only. She feels something wanting in him, without knowing exactly what. She does not realize that all he is offering her, all he has ever been able to offer her, is the sentiment of love, and not love itself. This incessant struggle on the part of Ellénore to feed a flame that has no existence seems to me to be the very heart of the drama.

And now, as to Adolphe's "pity." Was he abnormally sensitive to pity? Did he even feel pity? Despite his commentators to the contrary, I deny that he had this quality. It is his pity, he thinks, that holds him to Ellénore,

his pity that each time draws him back to her. He cannot tolerate either the sight or the idea of her suffering. But this is not pity. It is another infantile reaction of his hypersensitive make-up. Suffering creates a void, a fright, a terror, a kind of panic in him. He responds to get rid of it. But to relieve himself—not Ellénore. To find an analogy to this kind of pity, we must go back to childhood psychology —to the child for example who, seeing its mother crying because of its naughtiness feels a sudden desolate loneliness and so throws its arms about its mother's neck and weeps with her.

The question will be asked: but has not Constant presented in Adolphe a pathological specimen, a curiosity for the phychologist and psychiatrist merely? Far from it. How many Adolphes there are in the world! How many Adolphes will read this book and see themselves for the first time in it! Life is not what it appears to be. It is neither pretty nor simple. Nor are we free in it. But there is this hopeful chance, that if we know and are honest with ourselves, we may at least give to others a little less unhappiness. If Adolphe

had no other value than this, to open our eyes to our own mysterious inner drama, its justification would still be complete.

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It is unnecessary at this late date to add anything to the pages of praise that have been bestowed upon this extraordinary book. It is not only firmly entrenched as a classic, but its reputation grows year by year. It is a book that can never grow stale or old fashioned, for it has truth and beauty and consummate art, and by virtue of these, is immortal. More it can be read over and over and each time the reader will find some thing new and arresting in it.

Some day I shall be like Bourget: I shall have re-read it then a hundred times.

Editor's Note

MANY years ago, I was travelling in Italy. I was obliged to remain some time in Cerenzia, a little village of Calabria, because of an overflow of the Neto. There was in the same inn a stranger who was obliged to remain there for the same reason. He was very silent and looked sad. He showed no impatience. He was the only man in the place to whom I could speak, and I sometimes complained to him about the delay. "It does not matter to me," he said, "whether I am here or elsewhere." Our landlord had learnt from the Neapolitan servant who waited on the stranger without knowing his name, that he was not travelling with a view to seeing places, for he visited neither ruins, nor sites, nor monuments, nor men. He read a great deal, but not systematically. He went out walking at night, always alone, and often he passed a whole day sitting motionless, his head in his hands.

At the moment when communications were re-established and we should have been able to leave, this stranger became very ill. Humanity prompted me to make it my duty to stay and look after him. There was only a village surgeon at Cerenzia. I wished to send to Cosenza for more reliable assistance. "It is not worth while," said the stranger, "the man here is all I need." He was right, probably without knowing it, for that man cured him. "I did not know you were so skilful," he said with a touch of humour the last time he saw him; then he thanked me for my attentions and left the place.

Several months later, I received at Naples a letter from the landlord at Cerenzia with a casket found on the road leading to Stromboli, the road the stranger and I had taken, but separately. The inkeeper felt sure that it belonged to one of us. It contained several very old letters of which the addresses and signatures had been erased, a portrait of a woman, and a packet of papers containing the narrative or history which follows this. The stranger to whom these things belonged had not left me any means of communicating

with him. I had kept them for ten years, uncertain what to do with them, when, having described them by chance to some people in a German town, one of them asked me with insistence to entrust him with the papers. Eight days later the manuscript was returned to me with a letter that I have placed at the end of the narrative because it would not be intelligible if one read it before knowing the history itself.

This letter made me decide on the actual publication, for I felt sure that the story could neither offend nor compromise anyone. I have not changed a word in the original. The suppression of the proper names was not my doing. They were merely indicated, as now, by initials.

Chapter 1

In my twenty-third year I had completed my studies at Göttingen. It was the intention of my father, a minister of State under the Elector of ——, that I should make the grand tour of Europe. Thereafter he wished to take me under his wing, to procure my entrance into the Department entrusted to his superintendence, and to prepare me for the high position I should one day occupy in his stead. By a tolerably rigorous application to work, amid surroundings wild and dissipated enough, I had won some honours which distinguished me among my fellow-students, and led my father to entertain hopes, hardly warranted perhaps, of my future career.

These hopes predisposed him to be unduly lenient towards the many delinquencies of which I was guilty. He never left me to suffer the consequences of my errors. He always

granted and sometimes anticipated my requests in that respect.

Unhappily his attitude towards me was magnanimous and generous rather than affectionate. I was acutely sensible of his entire claim upon my duty and gratitude. But there was never any confidence between us. Some vague tinge of irony in his disposition accorded ill with my temperament. My only impulse at that time was to abandon myself to those primitive and passionate impressions which carry the spirit out of the sphere of commonplace life and moves it to contempt for all the objects that surround it. I found in my father, not indeed a prejudiced judge, but a cold and mordant critic who would begin conversation with a tolerant smile and end it abruptly on a note of impatience. Up to the age of eighteen I do not remember having an hour's talk with him. His letters were kindly in tone and full of sound and sensible advice. But hardly were we together before he would assume a kind of reserve which I was at a loss to explain, and which produced a painful reaction in myself. I did not know then that this was but the outgrowth of diffidence, that

internal malady which lingers into our latest years, relegating to the heart's secrecy our profoundest emotions, turning our words to ice, deforming, as it passes the lips, all we would say, and which only permits self-revelation through a mist of vague phrases or irony which bites and wounds, as though we would take revenge on our own feelings for the bitterness we experience in being unable to express them. I did not know that even with his son my father felt shy, and that often after long waiting for some token of affection on my part—made impossible by his apparent coldness—he left me with tear-moistened eyes and complained in the presence of others that I had no love for him.

My constraint with him had a marked effect upon my character. Shy like him, but more emotional at this early period, I formed the habit of keeping my feelings to myself, of making plans in which no one else had part, of relying on myself solely for their fulfilment, of considering the advice, interest, help, even the bodily presence, of others a distraction and a hindrance. It became with me a second nature never to utter what was really in my

mind, never to engage in conversation except by sheer necessity, and then to enliven it by a continual levity of tone, making it less tiresome as well as serving to conceal my real sentiments. Hence a certain want of open-heartedness with which my friends reproach me to this day, and a diffidence in talking seriously which I have always had difficulty in overcoming. One of the results of this was a keen desire for independence, a great intolerance of the obligations that beset me and an insuperable terror of incurring new ones. I never felt at ease unless quite alone; and even now when I have to choose between two alternatives, the presence of a human being frequently unsettles my judgment, and my natural instinct is to hurry away to deliberate in peace. I had not, however, the extreme degree of egotism that such a bent of mind seems to suggest. Though nothing interested me but myself, that interest was not strong. I harboured in my heart, though but dimly aware of it, a craving for sympathy which, finding no satisfactory response, alienated me, one by one, from all to whom I had previously been attracted. This indifference to everything and

everyone was intensified by the idea of death which struck my earliest imagination; I have never been able to understand how people rid their minds of it so easily. It entered mine at the age of seventeen when I saw the death of an aged lady whose mind, of a remarkable and eccentric turn, had begun to exercise its influence in the formation of my own. Like so many others she had been thrown upon a world of which she had no knowledge with strong instincts and intellectual power of the highest order. Like so many others, as the penalty of not complying with artificial but inevitable conventions, she had seen her hopes blighted and her youth fade without blooming; at last old age had overtaken without overcoming her. She lived in a country house in the neighbourhood of one of our estates, solitary and discontented, with no interest beyond the resources of a mind that analysed everything. For nearly a year, in our interminable conversations, we reviewed life in all its aspects and death as the goal of all. After talking with her so much of death, I had seen her stricken with it under my very eyes.

This event filled me with perplexed feelings

as to the nature of destiny, with intangible dreamy surmises from which I was never again free. I read, from choice, the poets who dwell upon the brevity of human life. I came to the conclusion there was no object of desire worth the trouble of effort. Singularly enough, this conviction grew fainter in exact proportion to the years that gathered over me. Was it because there is in hope some touch of ambiguity, and that as hope recedes, existence assumes a sterner and more defined aspect? Was it because life seemed so much more real as its illusions vanish, like the outline of rocky peaks becoming clearer as the mists melt away?

On leaving Göttingen I paid a visit to the the little town of D——. This town was the residence of a prince who, like most German sovereigns, governed with mildness a country of small area, affording protection to enlightened men who came to settle there, left at complete liberty opinions of every kind and degree, and yet, restricted by immemorial custom to the society of courtiers, only mustered about him persons of a type essentially commonplace and mediocre. I was received

at this court with that curiosity which every foreigner, making an inroad into a circle of monotony and etiquette, is sure to arouse. For some time I observed nothing calculated to arrest attention. I was not ungrateful for the kindness shown me. But from the first my shrinking disposition prevented me from availing myself of it; hurry and fuss without intelligent purpose soon became wearisome and made solitude preferable to the insipid amusements I was invited to share. There was no one that I disliked, but scarcely anyone possessed for me the smallest attraction. Now people are offended by indifference; they attribute it to ill-nature or affectation; they will not believe that one is naturally bored by them. Sometimes I tried to suppress the boredom I felt; I fell back on mere silence; they took it for contempt. At other times, tired of my own taciturnity, I gave myself some freedom of sprightliness, and fancy once set going drew me on beyond all bounds. I related in one day all the ridiculous things I had noticed in a month. The hearers to whom I confided these spasmodic involuntary unbosomings showed no liking for them, and naturally

enough, for it was the need of speaking out that incited me, not the need of their confidence. In my conversation with the old lady who had given a bias to my youthful ideas I had imbibed an inveterate repugnance to all trite maxims and dogmatic standards. When, therefore, I heard the rank and file complacently discussing principles considered well established and incontestable in morals, expediency or religion—subjects which they as often as not placed in the same category—I felt a strong inclination to contradict them; not because I was necessarily opposed to their opinions, but from exasperation at convictions so stolid and unshakable. Besides, some indefinable instinct pointed me a warning finger to put no faith in those general axioms so absolutely comprehensive, so free from any cloud of doubt. Fools build up their moral system in concise and indivisible entirety, so that it has the least possible concern with their individual actions and leaves them pretty free in the details of conduct.

By this attitude I soon acquired an ill reputation for frivolity, persiflage and malice. My caustic remarks were received as evidence of a

spiteful nature, my jesting moods as so many attacks upon the whole body of respectability. Those whom I ridiculed, wrongly I admit, found it convenient to identify themselves with the principles which they accused me of calling in question. Because, without intending it, I had made them laugh at one another, they all made common cause against me. One would imagine that in uncloaking their absurdities I had betrayed a confidence which they had reposed in me. One would imagine that in revealing themselves to me in their true characters they had obtained on my part a promise of silence. I was not aware of having accepted that unduly onerous obligation. They had taken pleasure in giving a loose bridle to their tongues. I had found thereby the means of observing and depicting them; and what they called a breach of trust appeared to me an idemnity of a very equitable and legitimate kind for what I had suffered.

I have no wish to justify myself now. I have long abandoned this cheap and futile practice of the inexperienced mind. I only wish to emphasise—and that for others as well as for myself, who am at length beyond

the reach of worldly follies—the necessity sooner or later of becoming habituated to the human species, as interest, affection, vanity and fear have moulded it. Astonishment in the first blush of youth at the features of a society so factitious and unsophisticated indicates simplicity of heart rather than a malignant mind. Society has, indeed, nothing to fear from it. Its weight presses so heavily upon us, its *vis inertiæ* is so compelling, that it shapes us readily enough to the universal pattern. We are only surprised then at our original surprise, and find ourselves easy in our new frame of mind; just as, in a crowd about a passing show, we breathe freely after a while, though on first mingling with it we could hardly breathe at all.

If any escape this well-nigh invariable fate they keep their apostasy a secret from all. They suspect in most kinds of folly the germ of vice. They no longer make a jest of it because contempt takes the place of ridicule and ridicule the form of silence.

Thus a vague sense of unrest in the little *coterie* that surrounded me descended upon my spirit. They could not reproach me with

any reprehensible action. They could not shut their eyes to some actions that seemed to imply generosity and devotion. But they said I was an immoral person, a man on whom little reliance could be placed—two epithets ingeniously devised to suggest facts where there is no certain knowledge and to leave to the imagination what is incompletely known.

Chapter II

ABSTRACTED, preoccupied, listless, I did not observe the impression I was producing, and I was dividing my time between studies often interrupted, projects unfulfilled and pleasures devoid of excitement when a circumstance seemingly of little moment revolutionised my mental outlook.

A young man with whom I was rather intimate had for some months been endeavouring to ingratiate himself with a woman who was less insipid than most of those in our circle. I was the quite disinterested confidant of this aspiration. After a long period of devotion he succeeded in winning her heart, and as he had made no secret of his disappointments and distresses, he considered himself under an obligation to tell me of his success. Nothing could equal his transports or the exuberance of his joy. The contemplation of such happiness made me feel regret that I had not so far

sought any like experience, nor had any affair with women that could be considered flattering to my self-esteem. A new vista seemed to unfold itself. There was, no doubt, a strong seasoning of vanity in this longing that now possessed me, but it was not altogether vanity: there was less of it perhaps than I myself imagined. Human sentiments are obscure and intermingled; they are determined by a variety of impressions that escape analysis; and the spoken word, at best but a clumsy medium, though it may serve well enough to give them a name, is never capable of sharply defining them.

I had, in the paternal home, conceived a theory of womanhood more than a little immoral. My father, although a strict observer of conventional proprieties, indulged pretty often in a tone of levity when discussing the lighter intimacies of love. He looked upon them as amusements, not permissible perhaps but at least excusable; marriage alone would he consider from a serious point of view. He held it to be a golden rule that a young man must scrupulously avoid what is called committing a folly, that is, committing himself to a permanent engagement with any woman who is

not his complete equal in fortune, birth and external advantages. But apart from that, he considered that all women, so long as there was no question of marriage, could be taken, then left; and I have seen him smile with a sort of condonation at that parody of a well-known aphorism: "It does them so little harm and gives us so much pleasure."

People do not sufficiently realise what a profound impression is made by reflections of this kind upon the dawning faculties of youth, or how, at a time when the nascent intelligence is all unstable and vacillating, the very young are astonished to see the plain precepts which have been given them contradicted by a tittering cynicism at which everyone laughs approval. These precepts become, in their eyes, simply prescriptive formulæ which their parents enunciate in acquittal of their own consciences; and the jocular side of the matter seems to contain life's true philosophy.

Tormented by a vague emotion, I told myself that what I needed was love, and I looked into the little world around me. I saw no one who awakened in me that emotion, no one who seemed susceptible to it. I questioned my

heart and my tastes, but did not feel any stir of preference. While under the spell of this secret agitation I made the acquaintance of the Count de P——, a man of forty, whose family was connected with my own. He invited me to pay him a visit. An ill-starred visit! He had living with him as his mistress a Pole, a celebrated beauty although no longer in her first youth. This lady, in spite of the disadvantages of her position, had on many occasions displayed a wonderful strength of mind. Her family, of high distinction in Poland, had been ruined through the disturbances of that country. Her father had been exiled. Her mother had sought an asylum in France taking with her the daughter, whom she left at her death without a friend. The Count de P—— fell in love with her. I have never discovered the origin of a connection which, when I saw Ellénore for the first time, was long established and, so to speak, morally sanctioned. Had her unfortunate circumstances or her youthful inexperience driven her to a course alike repugnant to her education, the traditions of her class and the pride that was a special trait in her character? What I know, what

everyone knows, is that the Count de P——'s fortune having been almost completely lost and his liberty imperilled, Ellénore had given him such proofs of devotion, had rejected so contemptuously the most brilliant offers, had shared his insecurity and his poverty with such assiduous cheerfulness, that the harshest judgment could not refuse to do justice to the purity of her motives and the disinterestedness of her conduct. It was to her energy, her courage, her good sense, to sacrifices of every description which she made without a murmur, that her lover owed the recovery of some portion of his inheritance. They had come to D—— in order to carry on there a lawsuit which might restore to the Count in their entirety his former possessions, and they were expecting to remain there for about two years.

Ellénore was not gifted with extraordinary mental powers; but her ideas were sound, and her expression of them, always simple, was sometimes striking in the nobility of the feeling it revealed. She had many prejudices, but they were all in inverse ratio to any advantage she might reap from them. She attached great importance to a strict observance of morals

precisely because her own had not been strict according to accepted notions. She was extremely religious because religion severely reprobated her mode of life. In conversation she carefully avoided such freedoms of speech as would have appeared harmless to other women because she was always fearful lest others might think themselves warranted by the circumstances of her case in taking some real liberty of speech with her. She would have preferred to receive no one at her house but men of the highest rank and unexceptionable character because women, at the thought of comparison with whom she shuddered, usually cultivate a society by no means select, and, resigning themselves to loss of reputation, seek but amusement in their acquaintances. Ellénore, in a word, was at continual war with her destiny. She protested, one might say, by every word and every action against the sisterhood in which it was her lot to be classed; and as she felt that the reality of this classification could not be questioned and that no endeavour on her part could alter the fact, she was miserable in the last degree. She had brought up in the strictest manner the two children she

had borne to the Count de P——. One would have said sometimes that some spirit of revolt mingled with the affection, passionate rather than tender, she showed them, and that this caused them to be a source of trouble to her. When with the best intention some remark was made about their swift growth, the talents they promised to have, and their prospects in life, she would grow pale at the idea that they must one day be told the truth as to their birth. But the least hint of danger, their being an hour late, roused in her anxiety that seemed to be tinged with self-reproach and the desire to give them by endearments the happiness she could not herself find in them. This antagonism between her own feelings and the place she occupied in the world's estimation made her moods very changeable. She was often silent and meditative; sometimes she talked with impetuous vehemence; even amid the most general conversation she was never in a state of equanimity. But for that very reason something fiery and unexpected in her manner gave her a piquancy that could not have sprung from her natural disposition. The singularity of her position took the place of

mental originality. One watched her with interest and curiosity, as one watches a beautiful storm.

Appearing before me at a moment when my heart felt the need of love, my vanity of success in it, Ellénore seemed in my eyes a prize worthy of winning. She herself discovered some pleasure in the society of one who was so different from the kind of people she had hitherto met. Her associates consisted of her lover's friends or relatives and their wives whom the authoritative position of the Count de P—— had obliged to recognise his mistress. The husbands were devoid of both sentiment and ideas; the wives only differed from them in the fidgety and fussy nature of their mediocrity, since they lacked the tranquillity of mind that results from regular occupation and the transaction of business. A lighter tone, a conversation less stereotyped, a subtle blending of melancholy and vivacity, of despondency and hopefulness, of enthusiasm and irony, surprised as well as attracted Ellénore. She spoke several languages, incorrectly it is true, but always with spirited fluency, always with graceful taste. Her thoughts seemed to

spring to light through obstacles, and emerged from the effort with a new simplicity and freshness: for foreign idioms renew the youth of thoughts and free them from the commonplace and affected. We read together the English poets; we took walks together. I used to go to see her in the morning; I returned in the evening; we discussed a thousand topics.

I imagined I was studying her character and intellect with the cold impartiality of a scientific inquirer. But every word she uttered seemed to me clothed with some indefinable grace. The plot I laid to win her favour gave my life a new interest, animating it to a degree beyond any former experience. I attributed this almost magical change to her charm, which I should have enjoyed much more but for the pledge I had given to myself to win her. That pledge made a third in the intercourse between us. I thought it only due to myself that I should attain as quickly as possible the end I had in view. It was with reluctance, therefore, that I yielded to my feelings. I was in no haste to avow myself, for I believed I had only to do so to succeed. I did not consider myself in love with Ellénore; but already I

could not resign myself to the idea of failing to captivate her. She was never out of my mind. I formed numerous plans of action, a thousand stratagems that must lead to victory, with the vanity of inexperience that thinks triumph certain because it has never run the risk of failure.

Meantime an uncontrollable accession of shyness gave me pause. All I would say died away on my lips or faltered into a meaning I had never intended. I struggled inwardly against my incompetence. I was angrily ashamed of myself.

I tried to find reasons which would bring me out of this dilemma without admission of discredit. I represented to myself that it was unwise to precipitate matters, that Ellénore was insufficiently prepared for the disclosure I contemplated; it would be better to wait awhile. Nearly always, to ease our minds, we disguise from ourselves by sophistry and special pleading, our own weakness or impotence. This process satisfies that part of our intelligence which is, as it were, the critic of the other.

This situation did not alter. Every day I

fixed to-morrow as the unalterable date of a positive declaration, and each morrow ended like the last. The moment I left Ellénore my bashfulness fled. Then I would revert to my clever schemes and ingenious calculations. But I no sooner found myself in her company again than I fell into a flutter of confusion. Whoever could have read my heart, in her absence, would have taken me for a cold and deliberate libertine. Whoever had seen me at her side would have fancied he detected in me a novice in love affairs, the victim of a hopeless passion. They would have been equally mistaken in these conclusions. There is nothing absolute in the nature of man: no one is perfectly sincere nor completely treacherous.

Convinced by these repeated failures that I should never summon up courage to speak to Ellénore, I resolved upon writing to her. The Count de P—— was away from home. The struggles with my own weakness, the exasperation I felt at my inability to overcome it, doubt as to the success of my enterprise—all combined to inspire my letter with a tumult of feeling which had very much the appearance of love. Carried away by the warmth of my

own rhetoric, I felt, when I finished writing, some gleams of the passion which I represented with all the fervour at my command.

Ellénore saw in my letter what she naturally would see, the momentary infatuation of a man ten years her junior whose heart was awakening to emotions yet strange to it, and who was deserving rather of pity than of anger. She answered it in a kindly spirit, gave me affectionate advice and offered me her friendship in all sincerity, but declared that until the return of the Count she could not see me again.

This reply completely staggered me. My dreams of conquest, chafing under opposition, took possession of my whole being. Love, which an hour before I flattered myself I was only feigning, seemed to become all at once a passionate reality. I hurried to Ellénore's house. I was told that she was not at home. I wrote to her. I entreated her to grant me one last interview; I described my despair in heart-rending words and hinted at the terrible resolutions to which her cruel sentence was driving me. For the greater part of the day I waited in vain for an answer. I could only relieve my unutterable suffering by reiterating

to myself that on the morrow I would overcome all obstacles and see her at any cost. In the evening a little note from her was put in my hands. It was kind and gentle, and I thought I could trace in it a touch of regret and of sadness. But she persisted in her determination which she declared was irrevocable. On the following day I called at her house. She had gone into the country—to what part no one knew. She left no address to which letters could be forwarded.

For a long time I stood motionless at her door, hopeless about ever seeing her again. I was myself astonished to find how much I suffered. Memory recalled to me the moments when I thought I was only embarking upon an experiment of gallantry which I could give up without trouble. I had no conception of the poignant, insufferable pangs that were to tear my heart. Many days passed thus. Incapable alike of recreation or study, I was always hovering about Ellénore's door or would go into the town hoping at the corner of each street for a possibility of meeting her. In one of these aimless wanderings, which helped me to drown agitation in weariness, I saw the

Count de P——'s carriage returning home. He alighted on seeing me. After some ordinary conversation I asked him, concealing my anxiety, about Ellénore's sudden departure. "Ah, yes," he said. "One of her friends a good way from here is in some difficulty or other, and Ellénore thought a visit might be some consolation to her. She went without consulting me. She has an extremely sympathetic nature, and her mind, always alert, is scarcely ever at ease unless she is devoting herself to others. But I cannot do without her. I am going to write to her. She will certainly be home in a few days."

This intelligence reassured me. I felt my peace of mind returning. For the first time since Ellénore's disappearance I could breathe freely. She did not come back as soon as the Count de P—— had hoped. But I had resumed my customary life, and my anguish of mind was much lessened when one day after a month had elapsed M. de P—— told me that Ellénore would arrive in the evening. As he made a great point of insisting that she should take the position in society to which her intellectual superiority entitled her and

from which her invidious situation seemed to exclude her, he had invited to supper several ladies, the wives of his friends and relatives who were on visiting terms with Ellénore.

My former impressions, confused at first, soon growing more vivid, reasserted themselves. My self-esteem was involved. I was embarrassed and humiliated at the thought of meeting a woman who had treated me as a child. I pictured her smiling as I approached and fancying that a brief absence had cooled the effervescent ardour of hot youth; and I distinguished in this imagined smile an element of contempt for myself. By degrees my dormant emotions awoke. I had risen that morning as usual, thinking but little of Ellénore. An hour after I had received the news that she was expected, her image flitted before my eyes, dominated my heart, and filled me with a feverish dread of seeing her.

I kept to my room the whole day—as it were, hid myself. I trembled lest the least change of events should prevent our meeting. Yet nothing was more obvious and certain: but I longed for it so fervently that it seemed an impossibility. I was distracted with im-

patience. I was looking at my watch every moment. I had to open the window to get my breath. My blood scorched my veins as it raced through them.

At last I heard the clock strike the hour when it was necessary for me to join the Count. My impatience was suddenly transformed to timidity. I dressed slowly. I had such fear lest my hopes should be shattered, so sharp a pang of the despair I ran the risk of feeling, that I would have willingly consented to a postponement of the whole affair.

It was pretty late when I rejoined M. de P——. I saw Ellénore seated at the farther end of the room. I dared not come forward. I felt as if the eyes of all present were fixed on me. I took refuge in a corner behind some men who were chatting together. From this hiding-place I observed Ellénore. She appeared to me indefinably changed. She was paler than usual. The Count discovered me and came up, took my hand and led me to Ellénore. "I introduce," said he smiling, "the friend to whom your unexpected departure has caused the most surprise." Ellénore was talking to a lady beside her. When she saw me the

words faltered on her lips. She paused as if altogether taken aback: I was much in the same case myself.

People might notice us. I greeted Ellénore with a few casual words of inquiry. We both resumed our accustomed manner. Supper was announced. I gave Ellénore my arm, which she could not refuse. "Unless you promise me," I said as I escorted her to the supper-room, "unless you promise to receive me to-morrow at eleven o'clock, I leave this house at once; I renounce my country, my family, my father; I relinquish all sense of duty, and I go, no matter where, to end as quickly as possible the life which you see fit to make worthless to me." "Adolphe!" she began, and broke off. I made a movement as if to leave her. I do not know what my features conveyed, but I have never experienced so acutely the sense of shrinking to nothing.

Ellénore looked at me, mingled fear and kindliness in her expression. "I will receive you to-morrow," she said, "but I implore you——" There were many guests close behind us. She could not finish her sentence. I

pressed the hand on my arm. We took our places at the table.

I would have sat next to Ellénore, but the master of the house had made other arrangements. I was placed almost opposite her. At the beginning of supper she appeared absent-minded. When anything was said to her she answered in a gentle tone, but soon relapsed into her pensive mood. One of her friends, observing her silence and apparent depression, asked her if she was unwell. "I have not been feeling well for some days," she replied, "and even now I am in a very nervous state." I longed to make an agreeable impression in Ellénore's mind. I wished, by a display of geniality and wit, to dispose her in my favour, and to pave the way to the interview she had granted me. I therefore tried by various devices to engage her attention. I led the conversation in the direction of subjects which I knew interested her. Those in our immediate vicinity joined in it. Her presence inspired my efforts. I succeeded so far as to gain her ear and, soon, a smile. I felt such happiness, my looks were so expressive of gratitude, that

she could not fail to be touched. Her languor and lassitude disappeared. She could no longer resist the secret charm which the sight of the blessedness she was conferring diffused in her heart; and when we rose from the table our minds were in accord, as if they had never been otherwise. "You, see," I said, as I gave her my hand to return to the drawing-room, "that my whole life is at your disposal. What crime have I committed that you should take pleasure in making it a martyrdom?"

Chapter III

I PASSED a sleepless night. There was no question of calculations and plan-making in my mind now. I had in very truth and in all good faith the conviction of being in love. It was no longer the hope of success that incited me. A craving for the sight of her, for the bliss of being near her, possessed me to the exclusion of all other desires. The clock struck eleven. I made my appearance before Ellénore. She was waiting for me. She would have spoken. I begged her to hear me first. I took a seat near her, for I could scarcely stand, and began as follows, with frequent interruptions where utterance failed me:

"I am not here to appeal against the sentence you have passed on me. I am not here to recall a declaration by which I have had the misfortune to offend you. I would do so but I cannot. The love which you reject is undying. The very struggle I am now making

to speak calmly proves the intensity of a passion which is repugnant to you. But it is not to trouble you with this that I have asked you to let me speak. On the contrary, I entreat you to forget it, to meet me as we met formerly, to obliterate the memory of a moment's madness, and not to punish me because you know a secret which I ought to have locked up in my heart. You know what I am, the nature that men call wild and extravagant, the heart that is alien to all wordly interests, solitary amid the crowd, yet suffering from the loneliness to which it is condemned. Your friendship supported me. Without that friendship I cannot live. I have become used to it. You have let that sweet intimacy take definite form. What have I done that I should forfeit the only consolation for my sad and sombre existence? I am terribly unhappy. I have no courage left to endure such unhappiness. I hope for nothing, ask for nothing; I only want to see you, and that I must do if I am to live."

Ellénore remained silent.

"What do you fear?" I went on. "What do I ask of you? Only that which you concede to all. Is it the world's censure you dread?

The world, absorbed in its solemn fooleries, cannot understand a heart like mine. Do you think I should not be discreet? Is not discretion a part of my character? Ellénore, grant my prayer. You will find some sweetness in the granting. There must be some charm in being loved like this, in seeing me near you, living but for you, in knowing that you are my only source of happiness, in seeing me rescued by your presence from despair and misery."

I ran on in this strain for a long time, anticipating all objections, placing in different lights the arguments that told in my favour. I was so humble, so submissive, I asked so little, I should be so heart-broken by a refusal!

Ellénore was touched. She imposed on me a number of conditions. She would consent to see me, but only rarely, and then amid a numerous company and with the stipulation that there should never be any suggestion of love. I promised to do all she wished. We both had reason for satisfaction, I in having regained the privilege which I had been in danger of losing, Ellénore in finding herself in the position of being at once generous, sympathetic and prudent.

The next day I took advantage of the permission I had obtained. I continued to do so on the days following. Ellénore thought no more of the necessity for my visits being of rare occurrence. Very soon nothing seemed to her more natural than seeing me every day. A fidelity of ten years' duration had instilled unquestioning confidence into the mind of M. de P——. He allowed Ellénore the most complete liberty. As he had to contend with public opinion, which would have banished his mistress from the society suited to his rank, he was pleased to see her increase the number of her friends. His house thus filled was regarded by him as evidence of his triumph over that opinion.

When I made my appearance I saw that Ellénore's eyes brightened with pleasure. When she interested herself in the conversation those eyes turned instinctively in my direction. Nothing remarkable was spoken of without her beckoning me to hear it. But she was never alone. Whole evenings passed without giving me the chance of saying anything of an intimate nature, only some few

words of little significance and frequently interrupted. It was not long before I grew irritated at such restraint. I would sit in gloomy silence; I became variable in mood and bitter in speech. I could hardly contain myself when anyone else spoke apart with Ellénore; I interrupted these conversations with scant ceremony. It mattered little to me that people might take offence, and I was not always deterred by fear of compromising her. She complained to me of the change in my behaviour.

"What do you expect?" I said irritably. "You think, no doubt, that you have conferred great benefits on me. I am obliged to tell you that you are mistaken. I am not much enamoured of your new code of life. You used to live in retirement. You considered social functious an annoyance. You shunned these eternal conversations that are prolonged for the simple reason that they ought never to have been commenced. Now your door is open to the entire countryside. One would think that in asking you to let me visit you I had obtained that favour for the universe. I

confess that when I saw you so retiring a little while ago, I never expected to find you so frivolous."

I observed in Ellénore's countenance the traces of displeasure and distress. "Dear Ellénore," I said in suddenly softened tones, "do I not deserve to be a little better treated than the crowd that surrounds you? Has not friendship its secrets? Is it not shy and distrustful amid the chatter of the crowd?"

Ellénore feared that by maintaining her inflexibility she might renew the reckless spirit that had alarmed her both on her own account and mine. The idea of estrangement from me did not please her. She consented to see me occasionally alone.

Then the stringent rules she had lain down were rapidly relaxed. She let me describe my love in a lover's words. By degrees she became familiarised with that language. It was not long before she confessed that she loved me.

I passed hours at her feet vowing that I was the happiest of men, pouring forth a thousand protestations of tenderness, of unfailing respect. She told me how she had

suffered in attempting to tear herself apart from me; how there had been moments when she hoped that I would read her heart in spite of her efforts; how the least sound that reached her ears seemed to herald my approach; what joy, what fear she had felt in seeing me after absence; through what distrust of herself, in order to reconcile the inclination of her heart with the dictates of prudence, she had yielded to the distractions of society and welcomed the crowd which until now she had fled. I asked her to tell me about her feelings without omission of the minutest detail; and this account of a few weeks' experiences seemed to us that of a whole lifetime.

Love, by a kind of magic, takes the place of a multitude of memories. All other emotions require a past for their birth. Love creates, as if by enchantment, a past of its own by which it surrounds us. It gives the idea of having lived for years with a fellow-being who was but yesterday almost a stranger to us. Love is only a starry point; and yet it seems to illuminate all time. A few days ago it did not exist. Soon it will cease to exist. But while it does live, it sheds its beam upon the

epoch that preceded it as upon that which must follow it.

But these moments of serenity were fleeting. Ellénore was but the more on her guard because of the knowledge of her present position: and my imagination, my desires, an obligation of gallantry which I did not myself recognise, rose in revolt against such a love as this: sometimes timid, often irritable, I pitied myself, I grew angry, I showered reproaches upon Ellénore. More than once she almost determined to sever a connection which brought nothing into her life but trouble and anxiety. More than once I made my peace with her by my prayers, disclaimers and tears.

"Ellénore," I wrote to her one day, "you little know what I am suffering. Near you, away from you, I am alike miserable. Through the hours of our separation I wander about aimlessly, crushed under the burden of a life which is becoming unendurable. Society wearies me, solitude oppresses me. Those who watch me, who know nothing of what is absorbing me, who observe me with a disinterested curiosity, with a pitiless wonder, those

worldings who dare to speak to me of anything but you, inflict upon my heart a mortal pain. I shun them: but, alone, I seem to struggle for air under life's oppression. I cast myself down upon that earth which ought to open and engulf me for ever. I lay my head on the stones which ought, in their cold mercy, to allay the burning fever that consumes me. I mount the hill from which your house can be seen. I stand there, my eyes fixed upon the retreat I shall never share with you, and sigh to think that had I met you earlier you might have been mine. I might have folded in my arms the one being whom Nature has moulded to my heart's desire, that heart which has suffered so much in seeking for you and in finding you too late. When at last these miserable hours of waiting are over, and the appointed time for seeing you has come, I tremble as I walk to your house. I fear lest each passer-by should read the secret I carry in my breast. I check myself, delay my steps, postpone the moment of happiness, of that happiness which all about me imperils, which I always imagine myself to be on the point of losing, incomplete and troubled happiness

against which conspire jealous watchfulness, tyrannical caprice of circumstances, and the verdict that lies in your own will. When I reach your door, when I timidly open it, a new terror seizes me. I approach you like a culprit asking pardon from every object that meets my eye, as if all were hostile to me, as if all were envious of the felicity that is about to be mine once more. The least sound startles me: the least movement fills me with dread; the fall of my own footsteps makes me shrink back. When I am quite near you I still fear that some obstacle will separate us. At last I catch sight of you, I catch sight of you and breathe again; and I gaze on you and stand motionless, as the fugitive hails the protecting soil that delivers him from death. But even then, when my whole being goes out to you, when I have such a longing for rest after such anguish, for the solace of kneeling before you with bowed head, for the relief of free-flowing tears, I must do violence to my feelings and at your very side must live a life of repression. Not a moment when I can unburden myself! Not a moment of abandon! You watch me. You are embarrassed, almost

displeased, by my agitation. I do not know what state has succeeded that of the blissful hours when at least you confessed your love. Time goes on; new interests engross you; you never forget their claims. Strangers come in; I must cease looking at you; I feel that I must hurry away to escape the suspicions that gather round me. I leave your presence more distracted, more heart-stricken, more dumfounded than ever; I leave you only to relapse into that fearful loneliness wherein I struggle without encountering a soul on whom I can rely for a moment's relief."

Ellénore had never been loved in this way. M. de P—— had a very great affection for her, sincere gratitude for her devotion, deep appreciation of her character. But there was always in his manner a tincture of superiority towards a woman who had openly given her life into his keeping without the sanction of marriage. He might have done better for himself in the eyes of the world; he did not speak of this to her; perhaps not to himself; but what is unspoken remains a fact nevertheless, and wherever truth lies hidden it is guessed at. Ellénore had hitherto no experi-

ence of that absorbing passion, that existence merged in hers of which my very outbreaks of anger, my unjust accusations and reproaches, were the unmistakable tokens. Her obstinacy had intensified all my sensations, all my ideas. From transports of frenzy which frightened her I subsided into submission, into tenderness, into idolatrous devotion. I thought of her as of some divine being. There was something of religion in my love; and it wrought upon her the more because she was ever in dread of finding herself humiliated in another direction. In the end she surrendered herself, heart and soul.

Unhappy he who, in the first moments of love's fulfilment, does not believe his love eternal. Unhappy he who, with the arms of his mistress first encircled round him, can imagine the possibility of separation! There is something touching, something sacred, about a woman swept away by the flood of her heart's emotions. It is not passion, it is not Nature, it is not the senses that are the destroyers; it is the calculations which our social life makes a habit with us, the considerations which our experience imposes upon us. I loved, I rever-

enced Ellénore a thousand times more when she had given herself to me. I walked proudly among men; I looked upon them with victory in my eyes. The air I breathed was in itself a joy. I threw myself at the feet of Nature and blessed her for the unhoped, the immeasurable blessing she had deigned to bestow upon me.

Chapter IV

Loveliness of love, who can describe you? That certainty of having encountered the being Nature predestined for us; that sudden light streaming over life and making its mystery clear; that glad appeal, unfelt before, in the least of things about us; those fleeting hours, too rapturous to be analysed, which leave in the soul only a long trail of perfect happiness; that unreasonable and whole-hearted mirth which sometimes breaks through the quiet tenderness of mood; that perfect pleasure in meeting and anticipation during absence; that detachment from all mundane cares; that domination over all which surrounds us; that conviction that no one hereafter will reach the heights on which we dwell; that mutual insight which divines each thought and flashes back each emotion! Loveliness of love, he who knows you knows not how to describe you.

M. de P——, summoned by urgent business,

was obliged to leave home for six weeks. I passed the time almost entirely with Ellénore. Her passion seemed to be heightened by the sacrifice she had made to mine. Never without reluctance did she allow me to leave her. Whenever I left it was a question of a speedy return. Two hours away from me she found unendurable. She fixed with anxious exactitude the moment of my reappearance and I acquiesced joyfully; I was grateful, happy in the solicitude she displayed. But the interests of everyday life cannot be subjected arbitrarily to our inclinations. It was sometimes troublesome to find every step I took marked out beforehand and every moment of my time accounted for. It became necessary to hurry through all my engagements, to give up most of the connections I had formed. I did not know what to reply to my acquaintances when they suggested some scheme of pleasure in which, in the ordinary course of things, I could have no motive for declining to take part. In Ellénore's company I had no hankering after social amusements for which I had never much liking. But I could have wished that she would let me give them up voluntarily. I should

have felt greater pleasure in returning to her as a matter of choice without warning myself that the hour was at hand, that she was anxiously awaiting me, without the intrusive thought of her anxious waiting mingling with the happiness I was about to enjoy. Ellénore was doubtless a source of keen delight in the current of my life; but she was no longer the aim and end of it; she had become a tie. I feared also lest I should compromise her. My continued presence must cause surprise in her household; her children might notice it. I trembled at the thought of upsetting her life. I felt that sooner or later the bond between us must be severed, and that my sacred duty was to protect her from harmful consequences. I therefore mingled suggestions of prudence with protestations of my love for her. But the more I urged these considerations the less she was inclined to listen to me. At the same time I was horribly afraid of hurting her feelings. As I saw her face cloud with sorrow her wishes became my own. I could not feel happy unless she were happy in her reliance on me. When, pointing out the necessity of absenting myself for some little while, I reluctantly parted from

her, the thought of the distress I was causing followed me wherever I went. I was overtaken by a panic of remorse which, momently increasing, at last became unbearable. I hurried back to her side, rejoicing in the anticipation of soothing and consoling her. But as I approached her house, I found resentment against her possession of me tinging my feelings. Ellénore herself was violently emotional. She felt towards me, I think, as she had never felt towards any other. In her former relations her heart had been bruised by a humiliating subservience. With me she was perfectly at ease, since we were on terms of perfect equality. She was redeemed in her own eyes by a love that was devoid of all interested motive. She knew I was well assured of the disinterestedness of her love for me. But as a consequence of her complete spontaneity with me she made not the least effort to conceal her feelings; and when I returned to her room, annoyed with myself for having come back sooner than I had intended, I found her depressed or irritated. I had suffered for two hours away from her, weighed down by the thought that she was suffering away from me.

I suffered for two hours more before I succeeded in making my peace with her.

And yet I was not at all unhappy. I told myself that it was sweet to be loved, even with an exacting love. I felt I was a comfort to her. Her happiness was necessary to me and I knew I was necessary to her happiness.

The knowledge that in the nature of things this liaison could not last for ever, painful conviction though it was, served to calm my mind in its moods of weariness and restlessness. Ellénore's connection with the Count de P——, the disproportion of our ages, the difference in our position, my departure which had been already only delayed by various circumstances and was now near at hand, all these considerations urged me to confer and receive the highest bliss that life offered. I looked forward with confidence to the coming years; I did not trouble about the passing days.

The Count de P—— returned home. It was not long before he suspected how matters stood with Ellénore and me. Each day his reception of me became more frigid and gloomy. I spoke earnestly to Ellénore of the danger she was incurring. I begged her to let

me discontinue my visits for a few days. I laid stress upon the risks to her reputation, to her worldly resources, to her children. For a long time she listened in silence. She was pale as death. "Whatever happens," she said at length, "you will be going soon. Do not anticipate the hour; do not worry about me; let us make the most of the days, of the hours; these days, these hours, they are all I care about. Some presentiment tells me, Adolphe, that I shall die in your arms."

We therefore continued to pass the days as before: myself in a state of perpetual anxiety; Ellénore always melancholy; the Count taciturn and preoccupied. At last the letter that I was expecting came. My father asked me to return to him. I took the letter to Ellénore. "Already!" she said, after reading it. "I did not think it would have been so soon." Then, bursting into tears, she took my hand. "Adolphe, you know I cannot live without you. I do not know what is to become of me; but I implore you not to go yet. Find some excuse to remain; ask your father to let you prolong your absence for another six months. Six months! Is that then such a long time?" I

tried to oppose this suggestion, but she wept so pitifully, her features gave evidence of such cruel suffering, that I had not the heart to persist. I threw myself at her feet, folded her to my breast, assured her of my love, and left her that I might write to my father. I wrote indeed with the eloquence which Ellénore's grief had aroused in me; I gave a multitude of reasons for delaying my return; I pointed out the advantage of continuing at D—— certain courses of study which I had not been able to attend at Göttingen; and I despatched my letter with the ardent desire of obtaining the permission I requested.

In the evening I rejoined Ellénore. She was sitting on a sofa. The Count de P—— was at some little distance from her, near the fireplace. The two children were in a corner of the room, not playing, and showing by their glances those signs of uneasiness which scents some trouble the cause of which it cannot imagine. I intimated to Ellénore by a movement of my head that I had done as she desired. A gleam of joy sparkled in her eyes, but was instantly subdued. Not a word was spoken. The silence became embarrassing for all three

of us. "I am imformed, monsieur," said the Count at length, "that you are on the point of leaving us." I replied that I was undecided as to my movements. "It appears to me," he observed, "that at your age it is a mistake to delay entering upon a career; however," he added, looking towards Ellénore, "everyone here is not, perhaps, of the same opinion."

I had not long to wait for a reply from my father. I trembled as I opened the letter to think of the grief which a refusal of my request would cause Ellénore. I even felt as if I should share that grief in equal degree. But as I read that he gave his consent, all the dangerous consequences of prolonging the present situation rushed into my mind. "Six months more of suspense and concealment!" I cried. "Six months of injuring a man who has shown me every kindness, six months of endangering a woman who loves me, of risking the loss to her of a position in which she has security and consideration, six months of deceiving my father! And for what? To avoid facing the agony of a moment which sooner or later is inevitable. Do we not drink the cup of this agony day by day and drop by drop? I am

doing nothing but harm to Ellénore. My feeling for her, being what it is, cannot satisfy her. I sacrifice myself in vain to render her happy; and for myself, I live here unprofitably, bound hand and foot, with no moment of leisure, not an hour in which I can breathe freely and at peace."

I hurried to Ellénore absorbed in these reflections. I found her alone. "I am to stay for another six months," I said. "You bring me that news very coolly." "I am so afraid, I confess it, of the consequences of this postponement to us both." "It seems to me that for you at least they are not likely to be very terrible." "You know perfectly well, Ellénore, that it is never of myself I think most." "Nor very much more of the feelings of others." The conversation was drifting into a stormy channel. Ellénore was irritated by my regrets when I ought to be sharing her joy; I was irritated by the overthrow of my former resolutions. There was a violent scene. We broke out into mutual recriminations. Ellénore taxed me with having betrayed her, with having robbed her of the Count's affections, with having caused her relapse, from the

world's point of view, into that questionable position from which it had been her life's struggle to escape. I was enraged to find that she brought up against me what I had done only in deference to her wishes, and from fear of distressing her by doing otherwise. I complained of the straitened life I lived, of my youth frittered away in idleness, of the dictatorship she assumed over all my actions. As I spoke I saw the tears spring suddenly to her eyes. I broke off, I retracted, unsaid everything, explained all away. We fell into each other's arms. But a blow had been struck; a first barrier had fallen. We had both spoken irrevocable words. We might keep silence, but not forget. There are things one is long in saying, but once said they re-echo incessantly in our hearts.

We lived for four months in a state of strained intercourse, sometimes pleasant enough, never completely free, still finding therein some pleasure, but never again the former charm. Ellénore, however, showed no sign of growing detached from me. After the sharpest quarrels she was as eager to see me again, as careful to appoint the hour of our

meeting, as if our attachment had been of the most harmonious and tender description. I have often reflected that my own behaviour conduced to keeping her in that state of mind. If I had loved her as she loved me she would have shown a less reckless spirit; she would have considered on her side the danger she was running. But all measures of prudence were hateful to her because the suggestion of them came from me. She took no heed of the sacrifices she was making because her whole thought was absorbed in making me accept them. She had not time to abate her fondness for me because all her energies were employed in striving to retain me. The extended period fixed for my departure was coming to an end; and in thinking of it, I experienced a mingling of pleasure and apprehension, such as a man might feel who has to purchase a certain cure at the cost of a painful operation.

One morning Ellénore wrote to me to come to her without a moment's delay. "The Count," she said, "forbids me to see you. I will not obey this tyrannical decree. I have clung to this man in his exile, I have rescued him from poverty, I have guarded all his

interests. He can do without me now, while I cannot do without you." My endeavours to dissuade her from a course inconceivable to me may be readily imagined. I spoke of public opinion. "That opinion," she replied, "has never done me justice. For ten years I have fulfilled better than any wife a wife's duties, and it has not prevented my being denied me the position I deserved." I reminded her of her children. "They are M. de P——'s children. He has acknowledged them; he will provide for them. They will be only too happy to forget a mother who can give them nothing but her shame." I renewed my entreaties. "Listen," she said. "If I part from the Count, will you desert me? Will you desert me?" she said again, grasping my arm with a violence that made me tremble. "No, indeed I will not," I replied, "and the more unhappy you are, the more will I devote myself to you. But consider——" "Everything is considered," she interposed. "He will return directly; now go; do not come here again."

I passed the remainder of the day in unspeakable agonies of mind. Two more days passed and I heard nothing of Ellénore. I

was miserable in my ignorance of her fate; I was miserable in not seeing her; and I was astonished at the pain the separation cost me. I hoped, however, that she might have abandoned a resolution which frightened me on her account; and I had begun to flatter myself that this was so, when a woman brought me a letter in which Ellénore begged me to come and see her in a certain house of a certain street, on the third floor. I hastened there, still hoping that, being unable to see me at M. de P——'s, she had wished to meet me elsewhere for the last time. I found her making the arrangements necessary for a permanent stay. She came up to me, looking timid but happy, trying to read my thoughts in my eyes. "All is at an end," she said. "I am absolutely free. I have my own private income of seventy-five louis a year; that is sufficient for me. You have still six weeks to be here. When you leave I shall be able perhaps to be near you. You will come again and see me, will you not?" And as if she feared my answer, she hurriedly gave the details of her plans. She strove in different ways to convince me that she would be happy, that she had made

no sacrifice, that the course she had taken was independent of me and a most desirable one. It was clear she was making a brave struggle with her feelings, and did not believe half she said. She spoke rapidly and without a pause, postponing the moment when my objection should overwhelm her with despair. I had not the heart to offer anything of the kind. I accepted the sacrifice she had made; I assured her of my gratitude, of the felicity it conferred on me; I assured her of this again and again. I declared that I had always hoped for some irreparable turn of events which would make it my duty never to part from her. I ascribed my hesitations to a feeling of delicacy which forbade me to assent to anything detrimental to her welfare. In a word, I had no other thought than to banish from her mind every care, every fear, every regret, every doubt as to my love for her. In all I said I had no other aim in view, and in all I promised I was sincere.

Chapter V

THE rupture between Ellénore and the Count had social consequences such as might be easily foreseen. Ellénore forfeited in one day the good name that ten years of constancy and devotion had won for her. She was classed with the whole sisterhood of frailty, the members of which yield without a scruple to successive impulses. The desertion of her children earned her the character of an unnatural mother; and women of unimpeachable reputation observed with complacency that the loss of that virtue which is indispensable to their sex soon involves loss of all the others. At the same time they pitied her so that they might not forgo the pleasure of throwing the blame on me. They characterised my conduct as that of a seducer who had abused the rights of hospitality and destroyed, for the satisfaction of a passing fancy, the peace of two individuals, to one of whom he owed respect,

to the other the obligations of a guest. Some friends of my father took me seriously to task. Others, less ingenuous, conveyed their censure by oblique innuendoes. The young men, on the other hand, expressed themselves delighted at the dexterity with which I had superseded the Count, and with a thousand drolleries which I sought in vain to discourage congratulated me on my success and swore they would take example by me. I cannot describe what I suffered from these grave remonstrances and these shameful panegyrics. I am confident that if I had been in love with Ellénore I should have rehabilitated both her and myself in the world's esteem. When a genuine passion speaks with strength and authority, false conceptions and formalities of propriety are put to silence. But I was only a weak man, grateful and dominated. I was not uplifted by any enthusiasm that gushed from the heart. Therefore I expressed myself in an embarrassed way; I tried to draw to an end the discourse of my friends, and if they persisted, I cut it short by a few decisive words which warned them that I was prepared to make a quarrel of it. And indeed I would much rather have

given them that kind of satisfaction than discuss the matter.

Ellénore soon perceived that the voice of society was raised against her. Two of M. de P——'s female relatives who, under the coercion of his influence, had become intimate with her, made a tremendous clatter over the rupture, delighted to relieve themselves, under cover of high principle and morality, of their long-repressed spleen. The men continued to consort with Ellénore; but a suspicion of familiarity insinuated itself into their tone suggesting that she was no longer supported by a powerful protector, nor guarded by an alliance almost equal to that of marriage. Some visited her because, as they said, they had always known her; others because she was still good-looking and her recent lightness of conduct had put ideas into their heads which they were at no pains to conceal from her. Each gave a reason for continuing his acquaintance with her; in other words, each considered that such an acquaintance needed accounting for. Thus the unfortunate Ellénore saw herself sunk for

ever to that level from which it had been the aim of her whole life to extricate herself. Everything contributed to crush her soul and trample upon her pride. She regarded the avoidance of some people as an exhibition of contempt, the attentions of the others as indicative of certain offensive presumptions. She was miserable when alone, she was put to the blush when in company. Ah, it is true that I ought to have consoled her, folding her to my heart and saying: "Let us live for each other, let us forget the world that misunderstands us, let us be happy in our mutual esteem, in our love alone." And I did try to do so. But how can a resolution prompted only by duty rekindle a flame that is extinct?

Ellénore and I dissembled with each other. She dared not confide to me troubles which resulted from a sacrifice she well knew I had never desired her to make. I had accepted that sacrifice; I dared not complain of a misfortune which I had foreseen and had not the strength of mind to prevent. Thus we kept silence upon the one thought that constantly occupied us. We were lavish of fondness; we

spoke of nothing but love; but we spoke of nothing but love for fear of speaking of something else.

From the moment that there is any secret between two lovers, from the moment that one of them can bear to hide from the other a single thought, the spell is broken, the charm is gone. Outbursts of anger, unjust accusations, neglect even, are not irremediable. But dissimulation infects love with a foreign element changing its nature, degrading it in its own eyes.

By a curious inconsistency, while I repudiated with the sternest indignation the least breath of calumny against Ellénore, I myself was accessory to injuring her by the general tone of my conversation. I bowed to her inclinations; but I had conceived a horror of the imperious claims of women. I was always inveighing against their weakness, their inconsistency, the tyranny of their tears. I professed the harshest principles on that subject; and the very man who cowered before silent or tearful grief, who was haunted when absenting himself from his mistress by the thought of the anxiety he was causing, that very man

appeared in everything he said to be contemptuous and pitiless towards women. All my direct commendations of Ellénore could not obliterate the impression produced by such speeches. People hated her, or pitied her; they did not esteem her. They were against her because she had not inspired her lover with more consideration for her sex and more respect for the union of hearts.

A man who was in the habit of visiting Ellénore, and since her separation from the Count de P—— had given indications of the most violent passion for her, and obliged her by his obtrusive importunities to receive him no more, indulged in certain outrageous witticisms at her expense which I considered it was impossible to overlook. We fought a duel. I wounded him dangerously. I was wounded myself. I cannot describe the tumult of grief, terror, gratitude and love, which convulsed Ellénore's features when she first saw me after this affair. She took up her abode at my lodging in spite of my protests. She would not leave me for a moment until I was convalescent. She read to me during the day; she watched over me through the greater part

of the night; she noted my least movements; she anticipated my every wish. She vowed again and again that she never would have survived me. Touched to the quick, stricken to the heart with affection and remorse, I longed to discover in my heart something that would repay a devotion so tender and unremitting. I called to my aid memory, imagination, even reason and duty. Fruitless endeavour! The difficulties of the situation, the certainty of a future when we must part, perhaps a vague, unacknowledged revolt against a bondage from which it was impossible to free myself, preyed upon me from within. I cried shame on the ingratitude which I tried to hide. I was grieved when she seemed to be doubtful of a love so necessary to her existence. I was grieved none the less when she seemed to believe in it. I felt that she was the nobler of the two. I despised myself for being unworthy of her. It is a fearful thing not to be loved when you love. But it is much worse to be loved passionately when you love no more. The life which I had lately imperilled for Ellénore's sake I would have given many

times over if only she could have been happy without me.

The six months' leave which my father had granted was at an end; the time had come to think of parting. Ellénore did not oppose, did not even attempt to delay it. But she exacted from me a promise that, two months later, I should return to her or that I should let her rejoin me. I gave her my solemn assurance. What vow would I not have taken at a time when I saw her struggling with her tears that she might hide them from me! She might have dissuaded me from leaving her: I knew at the bottom of my heart that those tears would not have been in vain. I was grateful to her for not using her power. I seemed to love her better for it. I, too, did not part without keen regret from a being so absolutely devoted to me. Liaisons which last for a long time take root in us. They become an intimate part of our life. In a detached spirit we calmly resolve to break them, and believe we await with impatience the moment for doing so; but when the moment comes it frightens us; and such is the strange

constitution of our poor heart that we feel a terrible wrench in breaking away from those whose conpanionship has afforded us no pleasure.

During my absence I wrote regularly to Ellénore. I wavered between the fear that my letters would pain her and the desire of only showing the true state of my feelings. I would have had her understand me, but understand me without being mortified. I felt satisfaction when I brought myself to substitute such words as affection, friendship, devotion, for the word love. But suddenly I pictured to myself poor Ellénore, lonely and sad, with nothing but my letters to comfort her; and at the end of two cold pages I hurriedly added some fervid and tender lines likely to mislead her anew. Thus, without ever saying enough to assure her, I always said enough to leave her in doubt. Strange insincerity, the very success of which recoiled upon myself, prolonged my sufferings, and became intolerable to me!

I anxiously counted the days, the hours, as they slipped by. I would have slackened the steps of Time if prayers could have availed.

I trembled at the approach of the day when my promise must be fulfilled. I failed to devise any means of getting away. I failed to contrive any arrangement by which she could reside in the same town as myself. Perhaps—for why not be truthful?—I did not desire either course. I contrasted the quiet, independent life I was leading with the perplexity and vexation to which her passion condemned me. I found such a luxury in being free, in coming and going, leaving the house and returning, without anyone to trouble about me. In the indifference of others I found relief, so to speak, from the absorbing nature of her love.

I dared not, however, let Ellénore suspect I had any thought of giving up our plans. She had understood from my letters that it would be difficult to leave my father. She wrote to me, therefore, that she was making preparations for her own departure. For a long time I delayed opposing her decision. In replying I said nothing definite on the subject. I wrote vaguely that I should always be delighted to do anything I could to make her happy. Pitiful equivocations, half-hearted phrases, which I groaned to see so obscure and trembled to

make less so! At last I resolved to speak my mind. I told myself that I owed it to her. I appealed to my conscience against my weakness of will. I steeled myself by comparing her peace of mind with her uncertainties. I paced my room with long strides, rehearsing what I intended to say to her. But hardly had I written a few lines before my mood changed. I no longer interpreted the words according to the meaning they must convey, but according to the effect they could not fail to produce; and, some unknown power guiding my unresisting hand, I confined myself to advising delay for a few months. I had not said what was in my mind. My letter showed no trace of sincerity. The reasons I urged were weak because there was no truth in them.

To this Ellénore replied passionately. She was indignant at my not wishing to see her. What was she asking? To live in secrecy near me. What had I to fear from her proximity, in some obscure neighbourhood of a large town where no one knew her? She had given up all for me, fortune, children, good repute. She asked nothing in return for these renunciations but to wait on my steps like the

humblest of slaves, to be with me for a few minutes every day, to enjoy the moments I could spare her. She had been resigned to two months of absence; not that absence seemed to her a necessity, but because it was my evident wish. And now when, after counting the days as they dragged by, she had reached the end of her weary waiting, the period which I had myself fixed, I proposed that she should commence the slow martyrdom anew. She might have been deceived in me; she might have given her life to a heartless, obdurate man; I was master of my actions; but I was not the master who should make her suffer, forsaken by him for whom she had sacrificed all.

Ellénore followed close upon her letter. She sent me news of her arrival. I hastened to her with the fixed intention of showing myself overjoyed. I was eager to give the assurance her heart desired and to soothe or solace her, if it were but for the moment. But she had been wounded. Her eyes met mine distrustfully. She soon saw through the mask I was trying to assume. She stung my pride by her reproaches. She outraged my dignity. She so upbraided me in the pic-

ture she drew of my pusillanimity and weakness that she made me more angry with her than I was with myself. We were both transported with a rage that savoured of madness. All moderation was discarded, every decency forgotten. One might have fancied the Furies were pitting us against each other. We said everything that the most inveterate hatred could invent to blacken each other's character, and thus two unhappy creatures, each of whom knew no other mate in this world, who alone could do justice to and comfort each other, seemed to be two irreconcilable enemies.

We parted after a scene which lasted three hours; and for the first time in our lives we parted without explanation or sign of relenting on either side. Hardly had I left Ellénore when an access of poignant sorrow overwhelmed my wrath. I fell into a sort of stupor, dumfounded by what had happened. I kept repeating with amazement the words I had used; I could not believe myself guilty of them; I wondered what there was in me that could have me so forget myself.

It was very late. I dared not return to

Ellénore. As I entered my father's house I promised my conscience that I would see her early the next day. There was much company that night; it was not difficult, in so numerous an assembly, to withdraw myself from observation and to hide my agitation of mind. When we were alone my father said: "I am told that the Count de P——'s former mistress is in this town. I have always left you very much to your own devices, I have never inquired into the connections you may have formed; but it is not desirable at your age to have an acknowledged mistress; and I give you fair warning that I have taken measures to remove her from this neighbourhood." With these words he left me. I followed him to his room. He motioned me to retire. "Father," I said, "God is my witness that I have not brought Ellénore here. God is my witness that her happiness is my only wish, and that to secure it I would consent to see her no more. But beware of what you are doing. While you think you are separating us, it may happen that you are taking the means of uniting us for ever."

I sent at once for a valet who had been with

me during my travels, and knew of my attachment to Ellénore. I bade him discover, immediately if possible, the measures of which my father had spoken. He returned with the news, given him in confidence by my father's secretary, that Ellénore was to receive on the morrow an order to quit the town. "Ellénore driven out!" I exclaimed—"driven out ignominiously! She who only came here for my sake, she whose heart I have broken, she whose tears I have seen fall and shown no pity! Where then will she go, poor unfortunate one, a lonely wanderer in a world of whose esteem I have robbed her? To whom can she confide her miserable story?" My resolution was quickly taken. I gained the connivance of my servant with a profusion of bribes and promises, and ordered a post-chaise to be at the town gate at six in the morning. I formed plan after plan for rejoining Ellénore, never more to part from her. I felt I loved her as I had never before loved her. All my heart went back to her. I was proud of defending her against the world. I longed to clasp her in my arms. Love seemed to re-enter my soul. I was seized with a fever of brain, of heart, of

the senses, which revolutionised my whole being. If at that moment Ellénore had wished to leave me I would have given my life to keep her.

Day broke. I flew to Ellénore. She was in bed, having spent the night in weeping. Her eyes were still wet and her hair disordered. She was astonished to see me. "Come," said I, "let us go." She would have answered. "Let us go," I repeated. "Have you in the world any other protector, any other friend but me? Are not my arms your sole refuge?" She made signs of opposition. "I have reasons of the utmost importance—reasons that affect me vitally. In heaven's name come away with me." I hurried her down to the chaise. As we sped along I showered kisses upon her, I pressed her to my heart, I gave no answer to her questions save embraces. At length I told her that, having discovered the intention of my father to separate us, I had felt that I could not be happy without her, that I would devote my life to her and consecrate our union by all the ties of love. At first she was overwhelmed with gratitude; but soon she noticed certain discrepancies in my assertions. By

dint of persistent questioning she dragged the truth out of me. Her joy vanished. Her face clouded sorrowfully. "Adolphe," she said, "you are deceiving yourself. You are generous; you give up everything for me because I am the victim of persecution. You believe you love; you only pity."

Why did she speak these melancholy words? Why tell me the secret I wished to keep from myself? I strove to banish her suspicions. It may be that I succeeded, but the truth had struck a chill to my soul; the rapture was gone. I was steadfast in my self-sacrificing purpose, but I was no longer happy; already I was full of thoughts that I must hide from myself.

Chapter VI

On our arrival at the frontier I wrote to my father. My letter was couched in respectful terms but with a strain of bitterness. I was angry with him for having strengthened the bond he had attempted to sever. I gave him to understand that I should not abandon Ellénore until, suitably established, she had no further need of my support. I begged that he would not, by retaliation on her, compel me to remain with her indefinitely. I waited for his reply before taking any step as to our future arrangements.

"You are twenty-four years of age," he wrote; "I will not seek to exercise an authority which is drawing to an end and of which I have never taken much advantage. I will even hush up, as far as in me lies, your unaccountable proceedings. I will spread a report that you have gone away at my instigation

and upon business that concerns me. I will provide liberally for your expenses. You yourself will soon realise that the course you are taking is unworthy of you. Your birth, your abilities, your fortune, destine you for a mission in the world very different from that of dangling after a woman who is an alien without social standing. Your letter already gives me proof that you are dissatisfied with yourself. Consider this—that nothing is gained by prolonging a situation of which one is ashamed. You are idling away the best years of your youth, and that is a loss which is irreparable."

My father's letter stabbed me as with a dagger. I had told myself times out of number all that he told me. I had felt again and again the shame of a life slipping away in obscurity and indolence. I would rather have incurred threats and reproaches. I should have taken some pride in resistance and have felt the necessity of straining every nerve to protect Ellénore from the dangers in store for her. But there were no dangers. I was left at perfect liberty; and that liberty only served to make me chafe more impatiently under the

yoke which appeared to be of my own choosing.

We took apartments at Caden, a little town in Bohemia. I told myself that since I had undertaken the responsibilty of Ellénore's fate she must have nothing to complain of. I succeeded in repressing my own feelings. I hid within myself every sign of discontent, and employed all the resources at my command to create an atmosphere of forced gaiety which should disguise my profound melancholy. This effort produced an unexpected result. We are such creatures of impulse that we become in the end subject to the emotions we counterfeit. The vexations which I concealed I to some extent forgot. My perpetual appearance of light-heartedness dispersed the trouble at my heart; and the demonstrations of tenderness by which I sought to assure Ellénore of my love awakened in me a tender emotion which nearly resembled love itself.

Now and again disturbing reflections assailed me. When alone I fell a prey to fits of disquieting thought, and I formed many an extravagant scheme for escaping once for all from the embarrassing position in which I was

placed. But I dismissed these ideas as evil dreams. Ellénore appeared to be happy; how could I bring a cloud upon her happiness? So matters stood for nearly five months.

One day I perceived that Ellénore had something on her mind which she was trying to keep from me. After long pressing she made me promise not to oppose a resolution which she had taken, and admitted that M. de P—— had written to her. He had won his lawsuit. He recalled with gratitude the services she had rendered him and the bond that had held them for ten years. He offered her half his estate, not as the price of their reunion—that was now out of the question—but on condition that she would leave the disloyal being who was the cause of their separation. "I have replied," she said, "and you may well imagine that I have refused." I imagined it only too well. I was moved, but moved to despair, by this new sacrifice she was making for me. I dared not, however, at present offer any objection. My attempts in that direction had always been so unfortunate. I found means to be alone, that I might consider the course I ought to take. It was clear

to me that our relations must be terminated; afflicting to me, they were now destructive to her. I was the sole obstacle in the way of her recovering a position suitable to her merits and that consideration in the eyes of the world which sooner or later comes from affluence. I was the sole obstruction between her and her children. I was now without excuse for my conduct even in my own eyes. To yield to her in this instance was no longer generosity but culpable weakness. I had promised my father I would hold myself free from all obligations as soon as Ellénore had no further need of my protection. There was still time to enter upon a career, to commence a life of strenuous action, to acquire some claims to the respect of my fellow-men, to make worthy use of such gifts as I possessed. I returned to Ellénore believing myself to be immovable in my purpose, to induce her not to reject the Count de P——'s proposals, and to disclose to her, if need be, that I no longer loved her.

"Dear friend," I said, "we struggle sometimes against our destiny, but we always end by bowing to it. The laws of society are stronger

than the will of mankind. The most imperious desires are wrecked upon the fatal rock of Circumstance. In vain we persist in following only the promptings of the heart: we are doomed sooner or later to listen to reason. I cannot keep you longer in a position alike dishonourable to you and to myself. I cannot do it, for your own sake and for mine." Even as I spoke, without looking at Ellénore, I felt my thoughts slipping into vagueness and my resolve melting. I tried to gather up my strength of will, and went on hurriedly: "I shall always be your friend. I shall always think of you with sincerest affection. The two years we have been together will not fade from my memory: they will always remain the most beautiful of my life. But love, that transport of the passions, that intoxication of the will, that blindness to every interest, every duty, Ellénore, it is mine no more." I waited long for her reply, not daring to raise my eyes to her. When at last I looked up she was still as death; she stared vacantly at everything about her. I took her hand in mine: it was very cold. She pushed me away. "What would you have me do?" she said. "Am I not

alone, alone in the world without a soul who understands me? What more is there to say to me? Is not all said? Is not all ended, ended beyond recall? Leave me, forsake me, is it not that what you wish?" She would have left the room; she tottered. I tried to retain her; she fell senseless at my feet. I raised her, restored her to consciousness with my kisses. "Ellénore," I cried, "come back to me; I love you, love you with the tenderest of loves. I told you what was untrue that you might be the freer to make your own choice."

Inexplicable are the delusions of the heart: what will it not believe? Those few words, belied by so many that preceded them, gave Ellénore new life and confidence. She made me repeat them again and again; she seemed to gasp for them as for air. She believed me; she was intoxicated by her love, which she interpreted as our love. She persisted in her answer to the Count de P——, and I found myself more entrammelled than ever.

Three months later a new possibility of change in the circumstances of Ellénore's life presented itself. One of those revolutionary vicissitudes common in republics swayed by

party faction recalled her father to Poland and reinstated him in his possessions. Although he had scarcely any knowledge of his daughter, whom her mother had taken to France at the age of three, he wished to have her near him. The rumour of Ellénore's adventures had only permeated in a vague way to Russia where he had lived during his exile. Ellénore was his only child; he had a dread of solitude; he wanted someone to look after him; his one desire was to discover the whereabouts of his daughter, and, this ascertained, he invited her in pressing terms to come and live with him. She could not be supposed to have much affection for a parent whom she could not remember ever to have seen. Nevertheless, she felt it her duty to comply with his wishes. By this course she would ensure a large inheritance for her children and recover the social rank of which her misfortunes and her mode of life had deprived her. But she told me positively that she would not go to Poland unless I accompanied her.

"I am no longer," she said, "at a time of life when the mind is receptive of new impressions. My father is a stranger to me. If

I remain here others will be only too glad to cultivate his society. He will be quite as happy without me. My children will inherit M. de P——'s fortune. I know well that people will blame me. I shall be held to be an ungrateful daughter and an unfeeling mother. But I have suffered too much, I am no longer young enough, to attach great importance to what is said of me. If my resolution should appear somewhat harsh it is you, Adolphe, who must consider yourself responsible for it. If I had any illusions about you, I would consent perhaps to an absence whose painfulness would be mitigated by the prospect of a happy and lasting reunion. But you would like nothing better than to think of me as being removed from you by two hundred leagues, in the bosom of my family amid luxurious surroundings. You would write me well-reasoned letters in terms which I can anticipate: they would break my heart; I will not run the risk of them. I have not the consolation of believing that in devoting my whole life to you I have succeeded in awakening in your breast the response I deserve. But you have accepted the sacrifice, and as it is I am sufficiently

humiliated by the coldness of your behaviour. If I submit to such sufferings as you choose to inflict upon me, I do not care to hazard those I might bring upon myself."

In her voice and tone there was a hint of bitter determination which betokened a fixed purpose rather than deep or sorrowful emotion. For some time now it was with a foreboding frown that she asked anything of me, as if I had already refused her request. She regulated my actions, but she knew that my reason disclaimed them. She would have liked to penetrate into the inner sanctuary of my will, that she might break down a sullen opposition which stirred her into revolt against me. I spoke of the tangled position in which I was enmeshed, of my father's dearest hopes, of my own ardent aspirations; I entreated; I stormed. Ellénore was inexorable. I tried to awaken her generosity—as if love were not the most egoistic of all the passions, and therefore, when aggrieved, the most intensely selfish. I endeavoured, absurdly enough, to soften her towards my unhappy lot in remaining with her! I could say nothing which did not exasperate her the more. I promised that I would visit

her in Poland: but she could see nothing in my spiritless and passionless promises but impatience to get rid of her.

The first year of our sojourn at Caden came to an end with no change in our mutual relations. When Ellénore saw me gloomy and dejected she was grieved at first, then took the offensive and by her reproaches, extracted from me confessions of the weariness of soul I would have hidden from her. On my side, when Ellénore seemed to be contented I was annoyed to see her so cheerful amid a state of affairs that was costing me such misery, and I embittered these short intervals of tranquillity with innuendoes which enlightened her as to what I was secretly enduring. We assailed each other in turn with indirect remarks, only to fall back at last upon general protests and vague justifications—anything to get silence again. For each knew so well everything the other had in mind that each refrained from speaking rather than hear it. Sometimes one of us was inclined to yield. But we failed to hit on the psychological moment for sympathy. Our hearts, sore and distrustful, no longer went out to each other.

I often asked myself why I lingered on in this painful state. The answer was that if I withdrew from Ellénore she would follow me, and that I should provoke further sacrifice on her part. At last I came to the conclusion that I must concede one final point to her, and that she could ask nothing more of me when I had established her with her family. I was intending to propose that I should accompany her to Poland when she received the news of her father's sudden death. He had left her his sole legatee, but his will was complicated by certain codicils on account of which some distant relations threatened to dispute it. Ellénore, despite the slight connection that existed between herself and her father, was grievously afflicted by this event. She blamed herself for having neglected him. On second thoughts she transferred the blame to me. "You have caused me to fail," she said, "in a sacred duty. The only thing to be considered now is my fortune. I will sacrifice that for you still more willingly. But most assuredly I will not go alone to a country where I shall meet no one but enemies." "I have not desired," I answered, "to make you

fail in any duties. I could have wished, I confess, that you might deign to consider how I also have found it painful to neglect mine. I have not been able to obtain that justice from you. I am at your service, Ellénore; your interests are above every other consideration. We will go together whenever you wish."

Eventually we set out on our journey. The diversions of travel, the change of scene, the avoidance of disagreeable topics led us back from time to time to what remained of our intimacy. The habit of being together, the varied circumstances we had shared, had linked to many words and actions memories which made us live suddenly in the past and thrilled us with an involuntary tenderness, as lightnings quiver through the night without dispelling its gloom. We lived, as it were, under the spell of emotional reminiscence vivid enough to make the idea of parting painful, too weak to afford us happiness in being united. I yielded to these gentle influences as a relief from my habitual reserve. I would have liked to please Ellénore by giving her tokens of fondness. I revived sometimes the dead

language of love. But these feelings and this language were like the discoloured and withered leaves which languish on the branches of an uprooted tree.

Chapter VII

ELLÉNORE, on our arrival, was allowed to take possession of the disputed estate, on condition that she should dispose of no portion until the lawsuit was decided. She established herself in one of the châteaux that had belonged to her father. My own father's letters, while committing him to no definite point of attack, were filled with strictures obliquely directed against the step I had taken. "You told me," he wrote, "that you had no intention of going abroad. You explained at length all your reasons for not doing so. Consequently I was quite convinced that you would not go. Considering your independent spirit, I cannot help pitying you for always feeling obliged to do the things you have no wish to do. I pass no judgment, however, on a situation about which I am by no means clear. Up to the present you were supposed to be Ellénore's

protector, and as such there was something of nobility in the part you played, something which did honour to your nature, be the subject of your attachment what it might. Now the connection between you is no longer what it was. It is no more you who protect her; it is she who protects you. You live in her house as a stranger whom she introduces into her family. I do not pronounce upon the position you have chosen. But as it may have its disadvantages, I should wish to counteract them to the best of my ability. I have written a letter introducing you to M. de T——, our minister in the country you are visiting. I do not know if it will suit your convenience to make use of this recommendation. You will at least see in this a proof of my concern for you, and not in any way an attack upon that independence which you have always successfully asserted against your father."

I suppressed the reflections to which this attitude gave rise. The château where I was staying with Ellénore was situated at a little distance from Warsaw. I repaired to that city and presented myself to the Baron de T——. He received me with friendliness,

asked me the reasons of my visit to Poland, and inquired as to my plans. I hardly knew what to reply. After a few minutes of embarrassment on either side, "I am going," said he, "to speak frankly to you. I know the motives that have actuated you in coming to this country: your father has explained them. I may even say that I understand them. There is no man living who has not, once in his life, found himself distracted between the desire of severing some troublesome connection and the fear of causing misery to a woman he once loved. Youth, in its inexperience, greatly exaggerates the difficulties involved in such a dilemma. It chooses to believe the truth of all those demonstrations of sadness which, in the weaker and more emotional sex, replace the whole armoury of strength and reason. Its heart melts at the sight of them, but its self-esteem is flattered by them; and the young man under such influences who thinks in all good faith to sacrifice himself to the despair he has caused, only sacrifices himself to the promptings of his own vanity. There is not one of these heart-broken women—and the world is full of them—who has not sworn it

would be death to be forsaken; not one of them who has not survived and found consolation." I would have interrupted him. "Forgive me, my young friend," he said, "if I express myself too bluntly; but the good report I have had of you, the abilities you evidently possess, the career that awaits you—everything obliges me to speak without the least reserve. I can read your heart in spite of yourself, and better than yourself. You are no longer in love with the woman who dominates your life and directs your steps. If you still loved her, you would not have come to see me. You knew that your father had written to me; it was easy for you to foresee what I should have to say to you. You are not angry to hear from my lips arguments which you are continually urging upon yourself, and always ineffectually. Ellénore's reputation is far from being spotless. . . ." "Cease," I interposed, "cease, I beg of you, to prolong a discussion which can serve no useful purpose. Unhappy circumstances determined the early events of Ellénore's life. False appearances have occasioned a harsh judgment of her; but I have

known her for three years, and there is not upon this earth a soul more exalted, a nobler nature, a purer and more generous heart." "As you will," he replied, "but these are distinctions into which public opinion does not examine very closely. The facts are beyond dispute; they are well known. Do you suppose you obliterated them by forbidding me to recall them? But," he went on, "listen for one moment: in this world we must be clear as to what we want. You are not intending to marry Ellénore?" "No, indeed!" cried I; "she herself does not wish it." "What, then, is your intention? She is ten years older than you. You are now twenty-six. You will look after her for ten years more. She will have grown old. You will have arrived at middle age, without having commenced, or achieved, any satisfactory work. You will be overwhelmed with boredom; she will be steeped in ill-humour. Each day will rob her of some grace; each day you will become more necessary to her, and the apotheosis of an illustrious heredity, of a brilliant destiny, of extraordinary capacity, will be to vegetate in some obscure corner of Poland,

forgotten by your friends, lost to fame, victimised by a woman who, do what you will, will never be satisfied with you. One word more, and we will not return to a subject which you find so disconcerting. All pursuits are open to you: letters, the army, statecraft; you can aspire to a brilliant marriage; you are formed for success in all you undertake; but remember, remember, that there is between you and every kind of achievement an insurmountable obstacle; and that obstacle is Ellénore." "Monsieur," I replied, "I have considered it only respectful to listen to you in silence, but I must tell you nevertheless that you have not shaken me in my purpose. No one but myself, I repeat, can judge Ellénore. No one duly appreciates the truth of her perceptions and the depth of her fine character. So long as she needs me, I shall remain at her side. No success would compensate me for leaving her unhappy, and though I should have to sacrifice my career to defending her against the world, sustaining her in her afflictions, surrounding her with the security of my affection, protecting her from the injustice that

misjudges her, I should feel that I had not employed my life uselessly."

With these words I took my leave: but who shall say by what fickleness of temperament the feeling that prompted them subsided almost before they had escaped my lips! I thought, by returning on foot, to delay meeting this Ellénore whose cause I had been pleading. I passed hurriedly through the town: I was impatient to be alone.

When I had gained the open country I loitered on my way and a thousand reflections leapt to my mind. Those sinister words, "Between you and every kind of achievement there is an insurmountable obstacle, and that obstacle is Ellénore," echoed in my ears. I thought sadly of the years which had slipped by beyond redemption. I recalled my youthful aspirations, the confidence with which I anticipated a triumphant future, the praise bestowed upon my first endeavours, the dawn of Fame which I had seen brighten and vanish. I went over the names of many of my fellow-students whom I had treated with supercilious negligence and who, by dint of sheer stubborn

devotion to work and regularity of life, had left me far behind on the path to fortune, honour and distinction. I was incapacitated by my indolence. As misers visualise in the money they heap up all the fine things that money could purchase, so, conversely, I saw in Ellénore the disappointment of every hope of success that might have been mine. It was not a single career that I was foregoing: as I had never adopted any one, I seemed to be forgoing all careers. Having never made use of my faculties I imagined them to be unlimited, and I cursed them for being so. I could have wished that Nature had created me poor and mediocre, to be spared at least the mortification of wasting wilfully a valuable life. Every word of encouragement or commendation which my natural gifts had evoked seemed to me intolerable reproach, like admiration of the powerful limbs of some athlete loaded with chains in the depths of a dungeon. If I tried to take heart, to assure myself that the time for energetic action was not yet past, the figure of Ellénore rose before me like a spectre and drove me back into despair. I was moved to a fury of indignation against her, but by

an odd association of impulses that indignation did not in the least abate the fear of paining her.

My mind, weary of these bitter thoughts, suddenly took refuge in fancies of a very different nature. Some words, chance words probably, dropped by M. de T——, touching the possibility of a happy and tranquil married life, evoked the vision of an ideal life-companion. I mused over the peace, the esteem, the liberty of spirit that such a union would ensure, for the ties against which I had so long struggled curtailed my freedom far more than an authentic and authorised marriage. I pictured my father's delight. I became full of eager desire to resume my legitimate position in my own country and the society of my equals. I imagined myself discrediting by a strictly regular and irreproachable mode of life, all those condemnations which cold, shallow malignity had heaped upon me, and all those accusations with which Ellénore overwhelmed me.

"She incessantly accuses me," I thought, "with being hard-hearted, ungrateful, pitiless. Ah! If Fate had granted me a helpmate

whom the social proprieties allowed me to acknowledge, whom my father would not be ashamed to accept as his daughter, I should have been a thousandfold the happier for making her happy. That tenderness of heart which is misunderstood because it is bruised and buffeted, that tenderness the demonstration of which is so imperiously insisted upon but which my heart denies to anger and threats —how sweet to lavish it on some dear being, my companion upon the ordered and honoured path of life! What have I not suffered for Ellénore's sake! For her I have left my country and my family, for her I have wounded the heart of an old father who longs for me in a distant land; for her I tread this alien soil where my youth passes in solitude, without fame, without honour and without pleasure. So many sacrifices made from no sense of duty or impulse of love, do they not show what love and duty would make me capable of? If I so dread the tears of a woman who only dominates me by her tears, with what vigilance would I protect from every affliction, every vexation, one to whose service I should be proud to devote myself without

remorse or reserve! How different should I then appear from what I am now! How quickly would vanish the bitterness of soul which is accounted a vice in me because its source is unknown, how grateful to Heaven should I be, how kind to my fellow-creatures!

As I thought thus my eyes filled with tears. A thousand memories came thronging into my mind. My relations with Ellénore had made all such recollections hateful to me. Everything that reminded me of my childhood, the places where my earliest years were passed, my first playmates, elderly relatives quick to take note of my dawning intelligence, all such reminders jarred upon me and gave me pain. I was forced to dismiss from my mind the most pleasing fancies, the most natural desires, as forbidden topics. The companion which my imagination had suddenly created, on the other hand, welcomed all these fancies and gave her blessing to all these desires. She smiled brightly upon my duties, my pleasures, my predilections. She brought my present life into harmony with that period of youth when hope pointed to a brilliant future, that period from which, as by an abyss, Ellénore

had separated me. The most trifling occurrences, the most insignificant objects, stood out in my memory. I saw again the old château where I lived with my father, the woods that surrounded it, the stream that ran by its walls, the mountains rising against the horizon. All these things seemed so much a part of the present, so instinct with life, that they thrilled me with an overpowering emotion. And my imagination placed in the picture an innocent young creature who added to its beauty, who suffused it with the radiance of hope. I wandered about, lost in this reverie, with no thought of a definite purpose, with no hint to myself that it involved separation from Ellénore, with only a dim and misty consciousness of realities, in the state of a man distraught with pain whom sleep has solaced with a dream, and who feels that the dream is about to fade. Suddenly I saw Ellénore's château which I had unwittingly approached. I stood still. I took another path. I was only too willing to defer the moment that should bring once more the sound of her voice.

The day waned beneath a clear sky: the

fields were deserted. The labours of man were at an end: they left Nature to her solitary reign. My thoughts gradually took a graver and sombre tone. The shadows that deepened every moment, the silence that encompassed me, broken only by rare and distant sounds, stilled the tumult within my breast and gave birth to calm and solemn meditation. I turned my eyes upon the grey horizon to which there was now no perceptible limit, and which gave me a sensation of infinity. It was long since I had experienced such a feeling as this. Always absorbed in personal considerations, and these always introspective, my thoughts bent upon myself and my surroundings, I had become a stranger to all abstract ideas. I was wholly wrapped up in Ellénore and myself: in Ellénore who aroused in me no sentiment but that of pity mingling with my weariness: in myself for whom I had now lost every feeling of respect. I had shrunk, as it were, into a new kind of egoism, an egoism of cowardice, discontent and humiliation. It gave me pleasure to revive thoughts of another kind, to find within me the capability of forget-

ting myself in disinterested aspirations. My soul seemed to rise above a long and shameful degradation.

Thus almost the whole of the night passed. I wandered aimlessly through fields, through woods, through sleeping hamlets. Now and again I saw in some distant window a feeble light piercing the darkness. "There," thought I, "there perhaps some unfortunate being is full of sorrow or struggling with death, with death the insoluble mystery, whose daily visits seem not yet to have convinced mortals of its reality; inevitable goal wherein no consolation, no relief is to be looked for; subject of lifelong disregard and of transitory panic. And I, too, am the dupe of this stupid inconsistency! I rebel against life as if there were never to be an end of it! I meditate bringing unhappiness upon one who is nearest to me, in order to clutch at a few miserable years which Time will soon snatch from me! Ah! let us give up these vain strivings: let us amuse ourselves by watching the swift flight of time. Let us remain unmoved spectators, remembering that half of life has already gone. We cannot retard the flight of time; is any-

thing to be gained by struggling against it?"

The thought of death even in my bitterest afflictions has always calmed me. It wrought its usual influence upon my spirit. My attitude towards Ellénore became less implacable. All my irritation disappeared. The only impression left upon me by that night of wandering fancies was a feeling of tenderness, almost of peace. Perhaps physical exhaustion had its share in bringing about mental tranquillity.

Day was beginning to dawn. I could now distinguish the scenery about me. I found that I was at a good distance from Ellénore's château. I pictured to myself her anxiety, and was hurrying as fast as weary limbs would let me to relieve it by my appearance, when I met a man on horseback whom she had despatched in search of me. He told me that since midnight she had been in a great state of alarm about me, that after going to Warsaw and making inquiries in the neighbourhood of the château, she had returned home in a state of indescribable distress, and villagers had dispersed in all directions to find out what had become of me. This account at first irritated me. I was annoyed to feel myself

held under espial in this obtrusive manner. It was all very well to say that her love alone was the cause of it. Was not this love the cause of all my misery? However, I succeeded in repressing a sentiment which I felt did me little honour. I knew she was alarmed and suffering. I was soon on horseback, galloping over the ground that separated us. She greeted me with transports of joy. I was moved by her emotion. Few words passed between us, as she soon insisted on the need of rest, and I left her, this time at any rate, without a word to vex her heart.

Chapter VIII

I ROSE from bed next day full of the ideas that had overpowered me on the preceding night. My agitation increased as day followed day. Ellénore made ineffectual attempts to discover its cause. To her insistent questioning I replied with monosyllabic reserve. I hardened my heart against her pertinacity, knowing well that any frankness would occasion suffering, and that this suffering would entail further dissembling on my part.

Alarmed and perplexed, she secured the assistance of one of her friends to discover the secret which she accused me of keeping from her. Anxious to hide the truth from herself, she sought an explanation in some definite fact where there was simply a change of feeling. This friend took me to task for my strange moodiness, my sedulous avoidance of all plans for a settled establishment with Ellénore, my unaccountable desire for solitude.

I listened in silence for some time. Till that moment I had not told anyone that I no longer loved Ellénore. My lips shrank from uttering a confession which seemed an admission of perfidy. I wished, however, to justify myself: I told my story in guarded words, giving the highest praise to Ellénore, acknowledging some inconsistencies in my conduct which I attributed to the difficulties of our situation, and not allowing one word to escape which would indicate clearly that the real difficulty, in my case, was the absence of love. The lady who listened to it was touched by what I said. She discovered generosity in what I called weakness, hardship in what I described as hard-heartedness. The explanation which enraged the impassioned Ellénore carried conviction to the mind of her impartial friend. People are so just when they have no interest in being otherwise! Whoever you may be, never appeal to a third party in affairs of the heart. Only the heart can conduct its own case, can probe its own wounds. Every mediator constitutes himself a judge. He investigates, uses precise terms; he takes indifference into account; he admits it as pos-

sible, recognises it when inevitable; from that very fact he finds excuses for it, and indifference finds itself, to its astonishment, justified in its own eyes. Ellénore's reproaches had led me to believe myself guilty. I learned from her friend and ally that I was only unfortunate. I was tempted into a complete revelation of my feelings. I admitted my devotion to Ellénore, my sympathy, my pity for her; but I added the confession that love had no part in the obligations I considered myself to have incurred. The truth, which I had hitherto kept sealed within my breast or only told Ellénore on rare occasions when anger and exasperation got the better of me, acquired more reality and conviction for me from the mere fact that I had revealed it to someone. A grave step is taken, an irrevocable step, when you suddenly lay bare before the eyes of an intermediary the hidden subtleties of an intimate relationship. The light that floods the sanctuary of the heart completes the processes of destruction that darkness had clothed in secrecy: so do coffined corpses often retain their original form until the moment when daylight and air break in upon them and reduce them to dust.

Ellénore's friend left me. I know not what version she gave of our conversation. But, going into the drawing-room, I heard Ellénore's voice raised in angry tones. On seeing me she stopped speaking. She soon made some observations which, outwardly impersonal, were in reality specific attacks. "Nothing is stranger," said she, "than the zealous interference of certain friendships. There are people eager to advocate your cause simply to be in a better position to betray it. Thus they show their affection for you; I should prefer their hatred." I could easily see that her friend had taken my part against her, and had aroused her wrath by not thinking me sufficiently at fault. Consequently, I felt I had a secret understanding with another person to the exclusion and prejudice of Ellénore. It was one barrier the more between us.

Some days later Ellénore went farther. She was utterly incapable of self-control. When she had once convinced herself of her grievance, she went straight to the point of her indictment without reserve or precaution, preferring the risk of complete rupture to the restraint imposed by reticence. The two

friends, involved in this hopeless quarrel, parted for good and all.

"Why mix up other people with our private differences?" I said. "Will any third party help us to agree? And if we are never to agree again, what third party will bring us any help for it?" "There you are right," she replied; "but it is your own fault. There was a time when I need not have sought aid to solve the riddle of your heart."

All of a sudden Ellénore determined to make a change in her way of living. I gathered from her remarks that she attributed the discontent that preyed upon me to the solitary nature of our existence. She grasped at every false explanation rather than resign herself to the true one. We passed monotonous evenings together in silence broken only by a few cold words. The springs of free converse were dried up.

Ellénore resolved to become on visiting terms with the families of rank residing in the neighbourhood of Warsaw. I saw very clearly the difficulties and dangers of such overtures. The relations who disputed her title under the will had made known her errors in the past

and spread abroad calumnious rumours. I shuddered at the humiliations she was about to risk, and tried to dissuade her from this enterprise. All I could say was useless. Though intimated with the utmost delicacy, I wounded her pride by my fears. She imagined that I was ashamed of our relationship because her character was open to question. She was only the more desirous of regaining a position in reputable society. Her endeavours met with some degree of success. The wealth she possessed, her beauty which was still great, even the rumour of her past adventures, everything about her awakened curiosity. She soon found herself the centre of a numerous circle. But she was never free from an unavowed feeling of disquietude and anxiety. I was ill at ease on account of my own position; she fancied that I was so on account of hers. She made great efforts to make everything smooth. Her ardent desire to do so precluded moderation and caution. Her false position gave rise to something of discomposure in her manner, something of abruptness in her actions. Her mind was well balanced, but narrow. This

balance was shaken by the impetuosity of her character; and her restricted judgment failed to discern lines of least resistance or to appreciate fine distinctions. For the first time she had a real aim, and by mere precipitation she missed it. What mortifications did she swallow, without a word of them to me! how often did I blush for her without the courage to say a word to her! In the eyes of mankind, reserve and moderation have such virtue that I have seen her more respected by the Count de P——'s friends as his mistress than now by her neighbours as the heiress to a great estate and surrounded by her retainers. Overbearing and subservient by turns, sometimes complaisant, at others irritable, there showed in her words and actions a fiery spirit fatal to that dignity which comes only from calm.

While analysing Ellénore's deficiencies I both arraign and condemn myself. One word would have brought peace to her soul. Why could I not speak that word?

Meanwhile we lived together more peacefully. Amusement diverted our minds from their habitual train of thought. We were only rarely alone, and as we now discussed facts

rather than sentiments, our conversation recaptured something of its old charm. But soon this novel mode of life became for me the occasion of a new perplexity. Submerged in the crowd that thronged about Ellénore, I perceived that I was the subject of wonder and of censure. The time approached when the lawsuit was to be decided. Her opponents contended that she had alienated her father's affection by her repeated transgressions. My presence gave some colour to their allegations. Her friends blamed me for standing in her light. They found excuse for her passion for me; but they attacked me as unscrupulous. I took advantage, they said, of an infatuation which I ought to have checked. Yet I alone knew that if I left her I should drag her along after me, and that to follow me she would throw to the winds all care of fortune, every consideration of prudence. I could not reveal this secret to society at large. So I appeared, in Ellénore's establishment, as a foreign influence prejudicial to the success of the proceedings which were about to determine her fate; and by an absurd inversion of the truth, while I was the victim of her relentless decisions, it

was she who was pitied as the victim of my despotic power.

A new matter arose to complicate still more this miserable state of affairs.

A singular change took place all at once in Ellénore's tone and behaviour. Hitherto her thoughts seemed to be occupied with no one but myself. I suddenly noticed that she was accepting and encouraging the attentions of the men who surrounded her. This woman, so reserved, so cold, appeared suddenly in a new character. She encouraged the attentions and even the hopes of a crowd of young men, some of whom were attracted by her charms, while others, despite her former indiscretions, aspired in all sincerity to her hand; she granted them long and intimate conversations. She adopted with them that equivocal but seductive manner which attracts by hinting at indecision rather than indifference, evasion rather than refusal. I knew from her own lips later, and from corroborative facts, that she took up this attitude under the impulse of a false and deplorable motive. She thought she would revive my love by awakening my jealousy. It was a stirring of ashes that nothing could

kindle into flame. Perhaps also there mingled with this motive, though she did not know it, something of a woman's vanity. She was wounded by my coldness; she would prove that she had still the power to captivate. Perhaps, also, in the loneliness of heart to which I had condemned her, she found a certain consolation in hearing from others the words of love which she had long ceased to hear from me.

Be that as it may, it was some time before I understood her motives. I saw the dawn of my future liberty. I rejoiced in it. Fearful of disturbing the crisis on which I counted for my deliverance, I made no comment, and affected a kindlier tone, a more contented manner. She misinterpreted my kindness as tenderness, my hope of at last seeing her happy without me as the desire to make her happy myself. She flattered herself that her stratagem was successful. Sometimes, however, she grew suspicious at seeing me free from misgivings. She reproached me with raising no objections to these intimacies that seemed to threaten the loss of her. I dismissed all such remonstrances with jesting words. But I did not always succeed in quieting her fears. Her

character revealed itself through the dissimulation to which she had stooped. There were scenes again, scenes not less stormy though the reason for them was changed. She imputed to me the blame that was justly hers. She hinted that a single word would restore her to me unchanged. Then, exasperated at my silence, she flung herself into her coquetries again with fervour.

It is at this point, I know, that I shall be accused of weakness. I wished to be free, and I could have thrown off my fetters with the approval of all. Perhaps I ought to have done this. Ellénore's conduct authorised, seemed even to necessitate it. But did I not know that this conduct was caused by me? Did I not know that Ellénore, in the depths of her heart, had not ceased to love me? Was I to punish her for the imprudences for which I was responsible and, a cold hypocrite, find a pretext in them for abandoning her without pity?

In truth I am not trying to excuse myself. I blame myself more severely perhaps than another would do in my place. But I can at least bear solemn witness to my conscience that

I have never acted with interested motives, that my conduct has always been dictated by true and pure feeling. How comes it that, with these feelings, I have for so long brought nothing but unhappiness upon myself and others?

In the meantime, people watched me with surprise. My residence with Ellénore could only be put down to my extreme attachment to her. Yet my carelessness as to the connections which she seemed always ready to form gave the lie to that attachment. My extraordinary forbearance was attributed to loose principles, to moral apathy, which proclaimed me, they said, a man sunk in egoism and demoralised by worldliness. These conjectures, all the more acceptable because they were of the same nature as the minds in which they originated, were welcomed and repeated. The report of them came at last to my ears. I was indignant at this unexpected discovery. In return for my prolonged sacrifices I was misunderstood, slandered. I had acted against my own interests and relinquished every pleasure in life for a woman, and my reward was condemnation of the world.

I spoke sharply to Ellénore. A word sufficed to disperse the crowd of admirers whom she had gathered round her only with the view of awakening my jealousy. She limited her circle to the society of some ladies and a few elderly men. All went on quietly as before. But we were unhappier than ever. Ellénore considered herself to be invested with new powers. I felt I was loaded with additional chains.

Words fail me to tell of the rancours and rages that still further complicated our relationship. Our life was but a continuous storm. Intimacy lost all its charm, love all its sweetness. There came no more those short-lived reconciliations which seem to heal for the moment wounds that are incurable. The bleak light of truth faced us at every turn, and, in making my meaning clear, I chose the harshest and most ruthless words. I only desisted when I had reduced her to weeping, and if her tears, falling drop by drop like burning lava upon my heart, wrung from me a few qualms, they failed to wring from me a cry for pardon. At such times, more than once, I saw her rise, pale and prophetic. "Adolphe,"

she exclaimed, "you do not know the wrong you are doing. You will know it one day; you will know it from my dead lips, when you have brought me to the grave." Wretch that I am! Why, why, when she spoke thus, did I not throw myself at her feet!

Chapter IX

I HAD not been to see the Baron de T—— again since my first visit. One morning I received the following letter from him:

"The advice I gave you did not deserve the resentment implied in the long period since I saw you last. Whatever decision you arrived at in the matter that so vitally concerns you, you are none the less the son of my dearest friend. I shall none the less enjoy the pleasure of your society, and I shall be delighted to introduce you to a circle of friends with whom, I think I may promise, you will find it agreeable to associate yourself. Allow me to add that the more singularity there is in the kind of life you are leading, and which I do not in any way censure, the more important it is for you to dispel certain prejudices, groundless no doubt, by showing yourself in the world to which you belong."

I was grateful for such friendliness from

a man so advanced in years. I paid him a second visit: there was no mention of Ellénore. He invited me to stay to dinner with clever and amiable people. I was at first ill at ease; but I made an effort, recovered my spirits and talked. I displayed, to the best of my ability, my mother-wit, and my acquirements. I was conscious of success in winning their good opinion. I found in this success a sense of pleasure long denied me. This pleasure made the Baron's friendship the more welcome.

My visits became frequent. He placed in my hands some transactions connected with the Embassy which he considered might safely be entrusted to me. Ellénore was at first surprised at this change in my manner of life; but I told her of the Baron's close connection with my father, and of the pleasure I took in consoling the latter for my absence by showing myself to be engaged in some useful occupation. Poor Ellénore—it is with remorse that I now write it—poor Ellénore was glad to see me apparently more contented, and resigned herself with little complaint to passing the greater part of the day without me. When

some degree of confidence was established between us, the Baron referred to the subject of Ellénore; I was determined always to speak in her praise; but I certainly did so in a lighter and less personal way. Later, I intimated, by observations of a general character, that I recognised the necessity of detaching myself from her. Then the spirit of raillery came to my aid; I spoke jestingly of women and of the difficulty of liberating oneself from them. These dissertations were found amusing by an old minister whose heart was worn threadbare and who remembered that he also, in his youth, had been worried by complications arising out of love. Hiding in this way, what was really at the bottom of my mind, I managed more or less to deceive everyone. I deceived Ellénore; for I knew that the Baron was trying to estrange me from her, and I told her not a word of this. I deceived M. de T——, for I let him imagine that I had the intention of shattering the chains that withheld me. This duplicity was quite foreign to my native character; but man becomes demoralised the moment he is possessed of a single thought which he is obliged perpetually to dissemble.

Hitherto, at the Baron de T——'s I had only made acquaintance with men of his own particular set. But one day he invited me to a grand entertainment which he was giving on the occasion of his chief's birthday. "You will meet," said he, "some of the prettiest women in Poland. You will not find your mistress there, it is true: I am really sorry. But there are women who are only to be seen in their own homes." I felt the sting of this remark. I said nothing: but I secretly reproached myself for not taking up the cudgels in defence of Ellénore; had I been attacked in her hearing, she would have spoken up bravely for me.

It was a crowded entertainment. People stared at me curiously. I caught whispers in which I recognised the names of my father, of Ellénore, of the Count de P——. These died away on my approach, recommenced when my back was turned. It was clear that they were telling the story of my life, each one, no doubt, giving his own version of it. This state of things was intolerable. I broke out into a cold sweat, flushed and turned pale.

The Baron observed my embarrassment.

He came up to me, paid me the most marked attentions, sounded my praises wherever he could find occasion: and the authority of his exalted position soon obliged the rest to show me a like deference.

When the last guest had departed, "I should like," said M. de T——, "to speak to you once more with perfect frankness. Why will you prolong a situation which is so painful to you? What good are you doing to any one? Do you imagine that people are ignorant of what goes on between you and Ellénore? Everybody knows of the mutual discontent that embitters the pair of you. You are harming yourself by your weakness, you are injuring yourself equally by your stubbornness; for, as a climax to incongruity, you do not make happy this woman who is making you so unhappy."

I was still smarting under the remembrance of my painful experience. The Baron showed me a number of letters which he had received from my father. They revealed a distress much greater than I had imagined. I felt myself wavering. The idea that I was prolonging Ellénore s sufferings increased my irreso-

lution. Finally, as if everything had combined against her, while I hesitated she herself by her violence turned the scales of my indecision. I had been absent all day. The Baron had detained me long at his house after the entertainment was over. A letter from Ellénore was handed to me while I was with M. de T——. I saw in his eyes a look of pity for my servile condition. The letter was full of bitter reproaches. "What!" said I to myself, "I am not to be free for a single evening. I am not to be left in peace for a single hour! She hunts me down incessantly, like a slave that must be constantly brought to his master's feet!" And with so much the more violence in that I felt my weakness, "Yes!" I cried aloud, "I pledge my word; I give my promise that I will part from Ellénore; I will fulfil it within three days; I will tell her in person. You can let my father know this at once."

So saying, I left the Baron abruptly. I was oppressed by the words I had just uttered, and could hardly realise the promise I had made.

Ellénore was awaiting me impatiently. By a strange fatality she had, during my absence,

learned for the first time of the Baron de T——'s endeavours to separate us. She had been told of my conversations with him, of the pleasantries I had indulged in. Her suspicions once aroused, she had called to mind many circumstances confirming them. My sudden intimacy with a man I had but recently known, the close friendship of this man with my father, constituted, in her mind, irresistible proofs. Her anxiety had risen to such a pitch in the course of a few hours that I found her fully convinced of what she called my betrayal of her.

I had returned with the fixed intention of telling her everything. Confronted with her accusations, will it be believed that I thought of nothing but evading the subject! I even denied—yes, I denied to-day what I was resolved to declare on the morrow.

It was late. I left her. I hurried to bed, that I might make an end of this weary day; and when I could feel assured that it was over, I felt for the moment relieved of an immense weight.

I did not rise till nearly noon next day, as

if, by delaying the moment of our meeting, I could delay the fatal hour when I must redeem my promise.

Ellénore had become easier in her mind during the night, as a result both of her own reflections and of what I had said on the previous evening. She talked of ordinary matters with an air of assurance which showed only too plainly her confidence in the indissoluble ties that united us. How could I find the words that should sever them?

Time glided away with frightful rapidity. Each minute made the necessity of an explanation more urgent. Of the three days I had allotted myself the second was already drawing to an end. M. de T—— was expecting to see me on the next day but one at latest. His letter to my father had been despatched, and I seemed to be on the way to break my promise without having made the least effort to fulfil it. I went out, came in again, took Ellénore's hand, began a sentence, broke off abruptly. I watched the sun as it sank in the west. Night fell once more. One day was left me.

It came and passed like its predecessor. I wrote to M. de T—— to beg of him an exten-

sion of time; and, as is the way with weak characters, I crowded into my letter a multitude of arguments justifying my delay, showing that it would not in the least affect the resolution I had taken, and that from that moment the bonds that united me to Ellénore might be considered broken for ever.

Chapter X and Last

I PASSED the following days feeling calmer. I had postponed to an indefinite period the necessity for taking action. Ellénore no longer haunted my steps like a spectre. I made myself believe that I needed the whole time to prepare her for what was to come. I tried to be more gentle with her, more affectionate, to keep intact at least the memories of love. My uneasiness was different from that which I had experienced hitherto. I had prayed Heaven to raise suddenly between myself and Ellénore a barrier which it should be impossible for me to cross. That barrier was raised. I looked upon Ellénore as on one I was about to lose. Her claims upon me, which had so often seemed intolerable, alarmed me no more. I felt myself already relieved of them. I gave way to her more easily, and no longer felt the antagonism which was once always impelling me to break all bonds and have done with them.

No impatience to be free now; on the contrary, an unavowed desire to defer the fatal moment that should bring freedom.

Ellénore did not fail to notice this demeanour, so much more tender and sympathetic; she herself became less bitter. I sought occasions to talk with her, occasions which I used to avoid; I took pleasure in her overtures of love, once so repugnant to me, precious now as liable, each one of them, to be the last.

One evening we had parted after an exceptionally pleasant talk together. The secret I carried in my heart saddened me, but there was nothing acute in my sadness. The uncertainty as to the time of the separation I had resolved upon served to dispel any clear idea of it. During the night I heard unusual sounds in the château. These sounds soon subsided, and I thought no more of them. But in the morning they recurred to my mind. I was anxious to know what they meant, and went to Ellénore's room. What was my astonishment when I was told that since midnight she had been in a burning fever; that a doctor whom her attendants had summoned had pronounced her life to be in danger; and

that she had strictly forbidden them to inform me of it or to let me come near her.

I tried to exert my authority. The doctor himself came out and impressed upon me the necessity of keeping her free from all excitement. Though uncertain of her motive, he imagined she was actuated by the fear of alarming me. Distressed beyond measure, I questioned Ellénore's servants as to what could have happened to throw her, thus suddenly, into such a dangerous state. It appeared that after leaving me, she had received a letter from Warsaw brought by a man on horseback; that upon reading it she had fainted; that when she became conscious she had thrown herself on her bed without uttering a word; that one of her women, disturbed at seeing her in such an agitated condition, had, unknown to her, remained in the room; that towards midnight the latter had seen her seized with a shivering fit which shook the bed on which she lay; that she had wanted to send for me, but Ellénore had opposed this with such a frantic look of terror they dared not disobey her; that they had sent for a doctor, but that Ellénore had refused, and still refused, to reply to his

questions, and had passed the night faltering out broken words the meaning of which they could not understand, often pressing her handkerchief to her lips as if to prevent herself from speaking.

While they were informing me of these events another servant ran up with frightened looks. Ellénore seemed to be out of her senses. She recognised no one about her. Sometimes she cried out; she kept repeating my name, then, as in terror, made signs with her hand as if begging them to take out of her sight some object that was hateful to her.

I went into her room. At the foot of the bed I saw two letters. One was my own to Baron de T——; the other from himself to Ellénore. I saw but too plainly the clue to the dreadful enigma. All my attempts to gain time which I might still devote to softening our farewell hours had thus recoiled upon the hapless creature whom I would have cherished to the last. Ellénore had read my promises to renounce her, promises which had only originated in the desire of remaining longer with her, and which the very keenness of that desire had made me reiterate. The

unbiassed judgment of M. de T—— had easily discovered, in these repeated protestations, the irresolution which I sought to conceal and the subtle wiles of my own vacillation. But that ruthless friend had calculated, only too justly, that Ellénore would see in them an irrevocable decision. I drew near her. She shuddered. "What voice is that?" she cried. "It is the voice that has condemned me." The doctor saw that my presence increased her delirium and begged me to withdraw. How describe what I endured for three weary hours? At last the doctor came out. Ellénore had fallen into a deep sleep. He did not despair of her recovery if, on awaking, the fever should have abated.

She slept long. On being told that she was awake, I wrote a line asking her to see me. She sent a message that I was to be admitted. Approaching her I was about to speak. She stopped me. "Let me not hear," she said, "one cruel word from your lips. I complain no more, make no more resistance; but that voice which I have loved so dearly, which echoes in the depths of my heart, let it not come there again to break it. Adolphe,

Adolphe, I have been violent. I have done much to offend you; but you do not know what I have suffered. God grant that you never know."

Her excitement was extreme. She laid her forehead upon my hand. It was burning. A dreadful convulsion distorted her features. "In Heaven's name," I cried, "in Heaven's name, dear Ellénore, listen to me. Yes, the blame is mine . . . that letter. . . ." She shivered and shrank away. I held her to me. "Weak and tormented as I was," I continued, "I allowed myself to yield to a cruel insistence. But have you not yourself a thousand proofs that I am incapable of parting from you? I have been discontented, unhappy, unjust. Perhaps in striving too violently against a rebel imagination you have but strengthened fleeting fancies for which I now despise myself. But can you doubt the depth of my attachment? Are not our souls chained to one another by innumerable ties that nothing can break? Is not all the past ours in common? Can we look back upon the three years that have just ended without recalling impressions we have shared, pleasures we have tasted,

sufferings we have endured together? Ellénore, let us from to-day begin a new life; let us take a new lease of happiness and of love." She looked at me for some moments distrustfully. "Your father," she said at length, "your duties, your family, all that is expected of you?" . . . "Doubtless," I replied, "some time, some day, perhaps. . . ." She noticed my hesitation. "My God!" she cried. "Why do you give me hope, only to snatch it from me at once? Adolphe, I thank you for the struggle you are making. It has done me good, so much the more good that it will cost you nothing, I hope, in the way of sacrifice. But I beseech you, speak no more of the future. Reproach yourself for nothing, no matter what happens. You have been good to me. I have wished for what is not possible. Love was my whole existence: it could not be yours. Look after me for a few days more." Tears gushed from her eyes. Her breath came more easily. She leaned her head on my shoulder. "It is here," she said, "that I have always wanted to die." I caught her to my heart. I renounced again the plans I had contemplated;

I cursed my cruel fits of temper. "No," she answered, "you must be free and happy." "How can I be while you are suffering?" "I shall not suffer long; I shall not trouble you much more." I would have put aside the fears which I strove to think groundless. "No, no, dear Adolphe," she said, "when one has long prayed for death, Heaven sends at last an infallible presentiment which warns us that the prayer has been heard." I swore that I would never leave her. "That is what I have always hoped; now I am sure of it."

It was one of those winter days when the sun sheds a wistful light over the grey landscape, as looking with pity upon the earth it warms no more. Ellénore proposed that we should go out. "It is very cold," I said. "No matter; I should like to walk with you." She took my arm; we walked slowly along for some time without exchanging a word. She moved with difficulty and leaned on me so that I almost wholly supported her. "Let us stop for a little while." "No," she replied; "it is sweet to me to feel that I am still supported by you." We relapsed into silence. The sky

was cloudless, but the trees were bare; no breeze stirred the air, no bird flitted through it; all was motionless; and the only sound to be heard was the frosty grass as it crackled beneath our feet. "How peaceful everything is!" said Ellénore. "How submissive is Nature! And the heart, ought it not also to learn to be submissive?" She seated herself upon a wayside stone. Suddenly she fell on her knees, and bending her head, buried her face in her hands. I heard some words murmured low. I saw that she was praying. Rising at length, "Let us go back," she said. "I have taken a chill. I fear I shall faint. Do not speak. I am too dazed to understand you."

From that day Ellénore languished and declined. I called in physicians from all the country round. Of these some pronounced the malady incurable. Others lulled my fears with vain hopes. But Nature, stern and silent, with invisible hand, continued her inexorable work. At times Ellénore seemed to rally; one might have thought that the iron hand which weighed her down had been withdrawn. She raised her tired head. A more life-like colour

crept into her cheek; her eyes brightened once more. But suddenly, as if directed by an unknown power in cruel sport, this deceitful improvement vanished, from what cause no physician could say. I saw on that expressive face the tokens, the harbingers of death. I saw, lamentable and humiliating spectacle, that proud and strenuous spirit suffer many changes and modifications, as if the soul, buffeted by the body, metamorphosed itself so as to yield with less pain to the degradations of organic Nature.

One only passion ruled unchangeable in Ellénore's heart: her tender love for me. Her weakness forbade speech except at rare intervals; but she fixed her eyes on me in silence, and it seemed to me that her look pleaded for the life I could not give her. I feared lest my presence might cause her dangerous excitement; I invented occasions for going out; I wandered about all the places where we had been together. My tears fell on rocks and trunks of trees, anything that reminded me of her.

It was not mourning a lost love; it was a gloomier, sadder feeling. Love becomes so

much a part of the loved one that in its very despair there is a touch of sweetness. It struggles against realities, against fate; the intensity of its longing lends it a fictitious strength and ennobles it in the depths of sorrow. But my love was a dreary and lonely one. I had no thought of dying with Ellénore. I was about to live without her in this wilderness of a world where I had so often yearned to go my way in freedom. I had crushed the being that loved me; I had broken that heart, that fellow-heart of mine, which had never wavered in its devotion, in its unwearying fondness. Even now solitude was upon me; Ellénore still lived, but it was no longer possible to confide my thoughts to her. I was alone in the world, no longer within the atmosphere of love she had cast about me. The air I breathed was ruder, the looks of those I met more indifferent. All nature seemed to tell me that never again should I be loved.

Suddenly Ellénore's condition became more critical. Symptoms of unmistakable character gave warning that the end was near. A minister of her religion admonished her of

this. She asked me to bring her a small box which contained a number of papers. She made me burn many of them in her presence; but she seemed to be seeking for one which was not there, and she became extremely agitated. I begged her to give up this search which so agitated her and during which she had twice fainted. "I will do as you ask," she said, "but, dear Adolphe, do not refuse what I am going to ask you. You will find among my papers, I do not know where, a letter addressed to yourself. Burn it unread, I entreat you, in the name of our love, in the name of these last hours which you have soothed." I gave her my promise. She became calmer. "Leave me now," she said, "to devote myself to the duties of my religion. I have many sins to repent: perhaps my love for you was a sin: but I would not think it so if that love could have made you happy."

I left her. I only returned with the whole household to attend the last, solemn prayers. Upon my knees in a remote part of the room, I was alternately buried in my own thoughts, or surveying with involuntary curiosity all these people gathered together, the terror of

some, the apathy of others, and that singular result of custom which introduces an air of indifference into all conventional observances and makes the gravest ceremonies seem matters of form only. I heard them repeat the funereal sentences automatically, heedless of the fact that they themselves must one day be the principal actors in a like scene. I was, however, far from despising these ordinances. Is there one of them of which man, in his ignorance, dares to assert the futility? They soothed Ellénore; they helped her to take the tremendous step towards which we are all advancing, beyond which no one can predict his next experience. I am not surprised that man stands in need of religion; what astonishes me is that he should ever feel himself strong enough, sufficiently sheltered from the calamities of life, to dare dispense with it. He should rather, it seems to me, be driven in his weakness to invoke its aid. In the blank darkness that surrounds us, is there a glimmer we can afford to disdain? Amid the torrent that sweeps us along, is there a branch at which it is beneath our dignity to catch?

The effect produced upon Ellénore by so

mournful a ceremony appeared to have exhausted her. She fell into a quiet sleep. She awoke in less pain. I was alone in the room with her. We said a few words at long intervals. The doctor who had shown himself to be the most skilful in his predictions had forewarned me that she would not live another twenty-four hours. I glanced in turn at the clock which registered their progress and at Ellénore's face in which I could detect no new change. Each minute that passed revived my hopes, and I questioned the forecasts of a deceptive science. All at once Ellénore sprang up as in sudden panic. I held her in my arms. A convulsive tremor shook her whole body. Her eyes wandered in search of me; but in her eyes gleamed a nameless terror, as if she were imploring mercy at the hands of some menacing object which eluded my own vision. She started forward, sank back: one saw that she was struggling to escape. She seemed to be fighting against some invisible physical force which, weary of waiting for the fatal moment, clutched and held her so that it might stretch her on that bed of death. She sank at length beneath the rage of the

Adversary, Nature. Her limbs relaxed. She appeared to regain some consciousness; she pressed my hand. She would have wept—there were no more tears; she would have spoken—there was no more voice. Her head dropped, as in submission, on the arm that sustained her. Her breath came more slowly. A few moments more, and she was gone.

For a long time I remained motionless beside the lifeless Ellénore. The conviction of her death could as yet find no place in my mind. I stared in stupid astonishment at the inanimate form. One of her women, entering, spread the truth throughout the household. The outcries raised on all hands roused me from my stupor. I rose. It was then that I felt the first agony of grief, the horror of the eternal farewell. So much commotion, stir of common life, fuss and flutter that could reach her no more, dispelled that illusion to which I clung, that illusion by which I still believed in the living Ellénore. The last tie had snapped, the dread reality had for ever separated us. How heavily it hung on me, that liberty for which I had so long pined! What a void it left in my heart, that servitude

which had so often exasperated me! Once all my actions had a significance. I knew that each one of them could banish a pain or give a pleasure. I used to resent this. I was impatient because a loving eye followed my steps, that the happiness of another kept pace with them. No one noticed them now; they were of no interest to anyone. No one took up my time or was jealous of my hours; no voice called me back when I went out; I was at last free; I was loved no more; I was a stranger to everyone.

They brought me Ellénore's papers, as she had charged them. In every line I met with new proofs of her love, new sacrifices made for me and concealed. At last I found the letter which I had promised to burn. It was without address and open. Some words caught my eye in spite of myself. I tried in vain to turn away from them. But I could not resist the temptation to read the whole letter. I have not the heart to transcribe it in full. Ellénore had written it after one of those violent scenes which occurred before her illness. "Adolphe," she wrote, "why do you treat me so cruelly? What is my crime—

loving you, being unable to live without you? What strange vagary of compassion keeps you from breaking the chains that weigh you down and the heart of the hapless creature by whose side that compassion keeps you? Why deny me the sad pleasure of thinking you at least courageous? Why do you display such fury and such feebleness? The thought of my suffering pursues you, and the sight of that suffering cannot bridle your cruelty! What is it you wish? That I should leave you? Do you not see that I have no power to do so? Ah, it is for you who do not love me, it is for you to find in that heart which is tired of me, which all my love is of no avail to soften, the power to break the chain. You do not find it; you will make me waste my life in tears, you will make me die at your feet." "Tell me," she wrote in another passage, "is there a country where I would not follow you, a hiding place where I would not cower so that I might be near you yet not be a millstone about your neck? But no, you will not have it so. Whatever I propose, timid and trembling, for you have frozen me with fear, you impatiently reject. The best I can look for is your

silence. Such hardness of heart is inconsistent with your character. You are kind by nature; your actions noble and unselfish; but what actions can obliterate your words? Those sharp-edged words echo in my heart: I hear them in the night; they haunt me; they eat into my flesh; they cause your deeds to wither. Must I die, Adolphe? You would then be happy. She will die, this poor creature whom you have protected but whom you scourge with many stripes. She will die, this wearisome Ellénore, whom you cannot bear near you, whom you look upon as a stumblingblock, on account of whom you find every place in the world unhappy. She will die. You will get back, unshackled, to the crowd in which you are eager to mingle. You will know them for what they are, those people, and perhaps one day, revolted by the sordid hearts around you, you will miss the heart that was all yours, that beat only with love for you, that would have braved a thousand dangers to shield you, and that you no longer deign to reward with even a glance."

Letter to the Editor

I RETURN you, Monsieur, the manuscript which you have been so good as to entrust to me. I am obliged to you for your courtesy, although it has revived painful memories which time had effaced. I knew personally most of the characters in this story: for it is but too well founded upon fact. I was often in the society of this strange and unhappy Adolphe, at once its author and hero. I endeavoured by words of counsel to rescue this admirable Ellénore, worthy of a kinder fate and of a more constant heart, from the evil genius who, not less miserable than herself, held her under a kind of spell and ruined her life by his weakness. The last time I saw her I believed I had given her some strength of mind, armed her reason to do battle with her heart. After a too long absence, I returned to the place where I had last seen her. Alas! all I found was a grave.

You would do well, Monsieur, to publish this narrative. It cannot now give pain to anyone, and in my opinion would serve a useful purpose. The misfortunes that befell Ellénore are a proof that the most ardent feelings are helpless in a struggle against the accepted order of things. Society is too powerful: too many conventions strengthen its hold. It cruelly embitters love to which it has not given its sanction. It encourages that bias towards inconstancy, that weariness and discontent which are sicknesses of the soul, often suddenly invading the inmost sanctuary of love. Those who have no concern with the matter are wonderfully eager to make mischief in the name of morality and deal destruction in their zeal for virtue. One would think that the contemplation of affection is distasteful to them because they are incapable of feeling it themselves, and when they can find a pretext, they gladly attack and make an end of it. Woe betide the woman, then, who stakes her happiness upon a sentiment which everything conspires to empoison, and against which society, when not compelled to recognise it as legitimate arms itself with all that is evil

in the heart of man to discourage all that is good.

The case of Adolphe will not be less instructive if you add that, after being freed from the woman who loved him, he was none the less unsettled, less disturbed, less discontented; that he has made no use of the liberty regained at the price of so much suffering, so many tears; that, greatly deserving blame, he also merits pity.

If you need evidence of this, Monsieur, read the enclosed letters. You will there see him under very varied aspects of life, but always the victim of that mingled egoism and sensitiveness which were united in his character to the misfortune of himself and of others; foreseeing the misery he is about to cause, and shrinking back in despair after causing it; suffering for his good qualities even more than for his defects, because these qualities had their source in his emotional nature and not in his principles; in turn the most devoted and the unkindest of men, always beginning with devotion and ending with unkindness, thus leaving nothing in remembrance of him but his errors.

Reply

YES, Monsieur, I will publish the manuscript which you return me (not that I agree with you regarding the uses it is likely to serve; each one learns his own lesson at his own cost in this world, and the women who read it will consider they have met better specimens than Adolphe or are themselves worth something more than Ellénore), but I will publish it as a true history of the misery to which the human heart is subject. If it does contain any instructive moral, it is to men that this moral applies. It proves that this intellect of ours, of which we are so proud, is of no avail to procure happiness or to bestow it: it proves that strength of mind, constancy, fidelity, kindness, are the gifts we should ask Heaven to bestow on us, and by kindness I do not mean that evanescent pity which in no way subdues impatience nor prevents it from opening the wounds that a moment of regret

had closed. The chief affliction in life is the sorrow caused by others; no metaphysical reasoning, however ingenious, can exculpate the man who has broken a heart throbbing with love for him. I hate, moreover, the folly of a mind which believes it has excused what it has explained. I hate that vanity which has the assurance to look for sympathy when expatiating on the wrong it has done, and, soaring inviolable over the ruin it has brought about, occupies itself with self-analysis instead of repentance. I hate that weakness of will which always lays upon others the blame of its own incompetence and fails to see that the evil is not in its surroundings but in itself. I could infer that Adolphe paid the penalty of his character, fell into no steady routine, adopted no worthy career, squandered his abilities under the impulse of mere caprice and the stimulus of excitement; I say I should have known all this even if you had not supplied me with details concerning his later life, of which I am not yet sure that I can make any use. Circumstances count for little; character is everything. In vain a man cuts himself adrift from the objective and the external, he cannot

get away from himself; he changes the scene, but to each new one he carries the torment from which he hoped to be delivered, and, far as ever from amendment, he only finds he has added remorse to regret and failure to suffering.

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